



CONSUMER COUNCIL OF FIJI

## ANNUAL REPORT 2008

### Remove surcharge, says Council

The Fiji Electricity Authority (FEA) should reduce or completely remove its fuel surcharge, the Consumer Council of Fiji said yesterday.

Council chief executive officer Premilla Kumar said the wet weather coupled with plummeting price of fuel warrants their call.

"There is absolutely no reason why consumers should continue to be burdened with paying FEA's surcharge, especially when the Monasavu Dam is indicating sufficient water levels that enables electricity generation."

In addition, government has increased the fuel rebate to FEA from four cents per litre to 10c per litre, she said.

Kumar said consumers paid FEA more than they could afford to. They are paying for the cost of fuel to FEA through their taxes, and the fuel surcharge of 1c, tariff rate and VAT.

"The government surely cannot ignore the plight of consumers in regards to the many areas of payment where they make to FEA," she said while the surcharge by FEA boss Hamsukh Patel was a relief and did not bring relief to the pockets of consumers, who

### FEA must come out with the truth: CCF

The Consumer Council of Fiji is calling on the Fiji Electricity Authority (FEA) to come out with the truth on what it is now terming as a "looming power crisis".

Council chief executive officer (CEO) Premilla Kumar said FEA had completed some of its major renewable energy projects namely the Wainakasou Hydro Station, Nagado Hydro station, Butoni Wind Farm and Tropic Drasa.

These projects she said were understood to compensate for Fiji's reliance on diesel generated energy.

If Monasavu Dam is said to be performing poorly, these other

projects are set up and should ensure that a higher percentage of energy is produced from renewable sources than from diesel usage," said Ms Kumar.

She said Fiji consumers could not be fooled with the same old trick used by FEA to blame nature for its negligence.

FEA chief executive officer Hamsukh Patel said the average rainfall experienced in Monasavu in the last six years for the month of September was 400mm. However, only 200mm of rain fell in Monasavu in the month of September 2008 which is 50 per cent of the average rainfall for the last six years. The council said rainfall

statistics over a period of five years clearly indicated FEA was trying to create urgency and uneasiness amongst the consumers of Fiji.

"Rainfall statistics over a five year period from 2004 to 2008 clearly indicates that FEA is trying to create urgency amongst consumers by announcing a possible power crisis."

The council she says simply fails to understand the low water level at the Monasavu dam and therefore FEA's low percentage of energy generation from hydro; especially given that the Monasavu rainfall statistics for 2004 was the lowest recorded rainfall ever in the past 24 years.

### Concern over food stalls

□ NANISE VOLAU

THE Consumer Council of Fiji has expressed concern about food safety practices at the many food stalls at various public events around Suva City.

While, the sizzling aroma of food from Fumival Park, Albert Park and the Laucala Bay area is attracting a large number of hungry stomachs daily, the preparation of foods and drinks is worrying the council.

officers would monitor the situation.

The Consumer Council is using the opportunity during this festive week to promote its food safety campaign and is also monitoring vendors.

"The Council is pleased to note that the Ministry of Health is alert about the food stalls and has acted to issue cautionary advice to both vendors and consumers," said Kumar.

"The council echoes the health ministry's call

### Consumer watchdog hails food campaign

The Consumer Council of Fiji has received 17 complaints from consumers regarding food bought from restaurants and cafes

been successful in providing redress to all complainants. The Ministry of Health, the respective municipality and the concerned food

### Consumer council slams bus operators

ONE of the country's consumer protection agency, the Consumer Council of Fiji says it is shocked with the call made by the Fiji Bus Operators (FBOA) president Pyram Singh for the interim Government to scrap the council and the Prices and Incomes Board.

"Mr Singh made this call because he is of the view that the two consumer protection agencies are oblivious of the rising fuel prices and its effect on the bus industry. It's unsurprising that consumers in Fiji are suffering because of such perspectives held by the likes of Mr Singh," council Chief Executive Officer Premilla Kumar said in a statement released yesterday.

Kumar said that the FBOA president's did not know what the council was all about.

"To the full knowledge of the council, it is executing the tasks assigned under the

consumers?" Kumar said. Kumar said Singh should know that the council PIB had organised workshop with the FBOA Secretariat to educate stakeholders on movement of the global pricing, the determination of fuel prices in Fiji and implications of an increase on every sector of the society.

Kumar reiterated businesses do suffer from fuel price increases, how their suffering in no way be compared to that of consumers as businesses on the costs to consumers through the trickle down factor, doubling the burden on consumers."

"In the case of the industry in Fiji, the council has been maintaining stance on the fact that a price hike should not be considered in isolation, justify an increase in fares," Kumar said.

# CONSUMER COUNCIL OF FIJI



CONSUMER COUNCIL OF FIJI

## OUR VISION

To build a conscious and assertive consumer movement in Fiji.

## OUR MISSION

Making the consumer voice heard and making it count.

## OUR VALUES

### Consumer Satisfaction

- Effective and quality services to our consumers at all times; and
- Responsive to consumer complaints and queries with utmost respect and human dignity.

### Professional Excellence

- Teamwork, cooperation and self-discipline;
- Open and honest communication;
- Value new ideas and seek ways of doing things better;
- Apply enthusiasm and compassion towards work;
- Maintain high standards of ethical conduct;
- Being competent, accountable, transparent and responsible; and
- Value and enhance the cooperation and goodwill of counterpart organizations in Government, non-government organisations, civil society and external partners.

### Employee Satisfaction

- Reliable, rewarding and challenging environment for Council employees and;
- Equal opportunity for employees to utilize their full potential for quality performance and excellence.

### Our Principles

- Campaign constantly and fearlessly to change the policies and practices the adversely affect consumer interests;
- Maintain a highly disciplined results-oriented focus on maximising impact for consumers;
- Maintain neutrality in solving consumer complaints and;
- Carry out strong financial management and sound operating procedures.

# ANNUAL REPORT

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## Consumer Council of Fiji (CCF)

The Consumer Council of Fiji (CCF) is a statutory body established under the Consumer Council of Fiji Act, 1976 (Cap 235). The Council provides external pressure as a watchdog to create a fair and just delivery of goods and services. It represents and protects the rights and interests of consumers and in particular the disadvantaged groups, rural poor and women by identifying and articulating the policy issues that are of importance to the consumers. First and foremost the Council is an advocacy organization, conducting rigorous research and policy analysis on key consumer issues. CCF's insight into consumer needs is a powerful tool for influencing decision makers to bring about change.

### FUNCTIONS OF THE COUNCIL

Section 6 of the Consumer Council of Fiji Act stipulates the functions of the Council. The Council is required to do such acts and things it considers necessary or expedient to ensure that the interests of the consumers of goods and services are promoted and protected.

#### THESE FUNCTIONS INCLUDE:

- Advising the Minister on such matters affecting the interests of the consumers;
- Making representations to the Government or any other person/organisations on any interests of consumers;
- Collecting, collating and disseminating information in respect of matters affecting the interests of consumers;
- Supporting or maintaining legal proceedings initiated by a consumer, where such support is deemed necessary;
- Conducting research and investigations into matters affecting consumers;
- Advising and assisting consumers on matters affecting their interests;
- Co-operating with any person, association or organisation outside Fiji having similar functions and becoming a member of or affiliate to any international organisation concerned with consumer matters; and
- Soliciting and accepting for the purposes of the Council any money, land, or other property from the Government, any local authority, public body, organisation, any person by way of grant, subsidy, donation, gift, or otherwise.

### SERVICES OF THE COUNCIL

#### 1. Campaigns, Information & Media Division:

To empower consumers with knowledge and information to bring about reform in policy and practice that adversely affect consumer interests;

#### 2. Alternative Dispute Resolution & Consumer Advisory Division:

To assist consumers in resolving complaints through alternative dispute resolution, advisory services and legal representation;

#### 3. Research & Policy Analysis Division:

To identify and undertake broad-based and complaints driven research on key consumer protection legislations that promote and protect consumer interests through necessary policy change.



## Board Members 2008



### Chairman

#### Mr. NARENDRA PADARATH

Mr. Narendra Padarath, JP, is the Chairman of the Consumer Council of Fiji. He is the Managing Director of the Padarath Group of Companies, which amongst other achievements pioneered large scale poultry production in Fiji. He has served in a leadership role on a number of charitable, educational and sporting bodies. Narendra was a Member of Parliament and continues to serve the people of Ba and Fiji.



### Member

#### Dr. SALESI F SAVOU

Dr. Savou was employed by the Ministry of Health as the Acting Director of Primary and Preventative Health Services from 1986 - 1988. He retired in January 1988 and took up the post of the Director of the National Food and Nutrition Council of Fiji Secretariat in April 1988 until December 1999. He has been a board member of the Consumer Council of Fiji since September 1989.



### Member

#### Mr. RAMAN DAHIA

Mr. Dahia is the Chief Operating Officer and Finance Director of Dahia Shoes Operating Entities. He is an accountant by profession and is an executive member of the Fiji-New Zealand Business Council. He currently serves on the Board of the Consumer Council of Fiji and the Samabula Health Centre.



### Member

#### Mrs. ILISAPECI BOLE

Mrs. Bole is a former Principal Education Officer, volunteer worker with women's groups and current board member of the Consumer Council of Fiji. She has served in committees and boards of Government and NGOs, including the United Nations Women's Forum for Heads of Missions Spouses in New York, National Executive Board of the Soqosoqo Vakamarama and the President's College of Honors.

## Chairman's Report – 2008



“Over the past twelve months, the Council has continued to serve the interests of consumers through a strong performance in realizing its mandated objectives and by addressing the harsh economic realities that affected the interests and welfare of Fiji consumers.”

I am pleased to present the report for 2008. It was the year that has been both challenging and successful one as I took over the reigns of chairmanship of the Consumer Council of Fiji. Despite the continued funding constraints to which my predecessor has referred to in the previous reports, our services to the consumers in Fiji have been maintained in accordance with our statutory and other obligations.

Over the past twelve months, the Council has continued to serve the interests of consumers through a strong performance in realizing its mandated objectives and by addressing the harsh economic realities that affected the interests and welfare of Fiji consumers.

The overwhelming implications of the global recession for Fiji's island economy represented in the declining exports, increasing imports, increasing inflation, decreasing job opportunities, cost cutting and reducing purchasing power impacted every sector of our society, including businesses, industries, traders, service providers and the consumers. But the most affected were consumers who were burdened with the trickle-down effect of additional expenses incurred by traders. The pressure on the Council to perform to consumers' expectations was immense, coupled with the surge in the number of consumer complaints registered.

This report reflects the organization's achievements in building a conscious and assertive consumer movement in Fiji and making the consumer voice heard and making it count. To the Chief Executive Officer/ Executive Director, Management and the Staff, I unreservedly commend you on your team effort and

hard work. I would like to encourage you to continue championing the country's consumer advocacy programmes.

I would like to thank my fellow board members, who have contributed their skills and expertise on the consumer issues addressed by the Council, guiding the management, always with due regard to best practice in corporate governance. My thanks also go to our line Minister and his staff, networking partners, national and regional consumer protection agencies and Consumers International, and Aus AID, our key donor agency that have supported and worked together with us to ensure the development of consumer advocacy and consumer protection locally and regionally.

Ultimately, I acknowledge Fiji's consumers, who through their support, constructive and at times negative criticisms, imparted ideas and knowledge and voiced complaints and concerns—all of which have taken consumer protection to a higher level in Fiji. I sincerely hope that consumers become more responsible and supportive of the mission and vision of the Consumer Council of Fiji.

Thank you



**Narendra Padarath**  
Chairman, Consumer Council of Fiji

## Chief Executive Officer's Report – 2008



The year has been a challenging one for the Council with consumers affected by inflation, which increased dramatically reaching an 18-year high of 9.5 per cent in August 2008.

The higher oil prices and rise in global food prices did not augur well for consumers and this situation placed more challenges for the Council to carry out its role of highlighting the critical issues and bringing these to the attention of the Government and important decision-makers.

The global financial crisis was reaching its peak and while Fiji was largely cushioned from any direct effect, the eventual ripple effect was a worrying prospect for consumers and the Council. Consumers paid more to fill up their gas tanks; buy groceries; travel by bus, taxi, ships/boats, and airlines; buy cooking gas, and get electricity in the house as prices on a range of items galloped.

The most significant impact on consumers in Fiji was the increase in the prices of motor spirit, premix outboard fuel and kerosene by six times and diesel price increased by five times. Consumers in Fiji paid the highest prices for fuel ever recorded in the country with \$2.44/ltr for motor spirit, \$2.39/ltr for diesel, \$2.38/ltr for premix outboard fuel and \$2.05/ltr for kerosene. Fortunately, the oil price hike eased off towards the end of 2008, bringing some relief for consumers, but the Council was compelled to maintain a high level of vigilance as the country faced other problems.

Increases in fuel prices corresponded with calls from the public transportation sector namely the bus and taxi industry to increase the fares charged to consumers. As such, bus fares increased in the year while the

### MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS OF 2008

- Cereal Testing with International Consumer Research & Testing (ICRT);
- Survey of Unhealthy Food Marketing to Children with Consumers International;
- Redress provided by Digicel on their misleading advertisement during their launch in October by providing transmitters for the phone;
- INKK publicly announced putting in measures to deal with consumer complaints;
- Food samples were tested from selected restaurant operators in Suva municipality where 50% of the restaurants failed the basic hygiene tests. This led to Suva City Council (SCC) in conjunction with TPAF, conduct training for restaurant operators to improve public health;
- Engagement with FIRCA and Ministry of Finance to reduce the age of the second hand vehicles from 10 to 5 years (it's now 6 years);
- Reduction in duty on food items and fuel after the Council campaign on cost of living;
- Apology from the Pacific Sun to its customers for misleading consumers through the advertisement, which offered fares as low as \$17.00 (FT 26/10/08);
- Vodafone reduced the charges of CARAZY competition from \$1.98 to \$0.99;
- Post Fiji apologized to FEA customers for the late delivery of the electricity bill for the month of October 2008 (FT 2/12/08) after Council highlighted the issue publicly;
- Digicel extended period for exchange or repairs of mobile phones from 7 to 28 days (FT8/11/08);
- Report on Insurance Industry published as the Council's first publication;
- A study on the Effectiveness of the Small Claims Tribunal commissioned;
- Funds secured from AusAID for Council's consumer advocacy program; and
- Launch of the Council's website – [www.consumersfiji.org](http://www.consumersfiji.org) for consumers to lodge complaints on-line.

taxi industry saw the flag fall fare rise from \$1.00 to \$1.50 for day trips and from \$1.50 to \$2.00 for night trips. The national and domestic airlines also corresponded to the escalating fuel prices by increasing their fuel surcharge rate. Consumers were not spared when the freight costs went up that led to increase in price of goods and services.

Further, the two gas companies, the Fiji Gas and Petroleum and Gas Company (Fiji) Limited increased the price of cooking gas to \$41.50 (13kg cylinder); the price in Fiji remained high, not reflecting the global market price.

Of great impact on consumers were the increase in the Fiji Electricity Authority's (FEA) tariff rates and the fuel surcharge rate that increased from 2.83cents to 5.53cents per KW. Consumers paid heavily to receive electricity services from the sole energy supplier in the country.

To assist low-income consumers, the Government in May 2008 announced the following policy measures, which became effective on 1st June 2008:

- Increase in the income threshold from \$9,000 to \$15,000;
- Zero rating of Value Added Tax on locally produced eggs; and
- Reduction in duty on basic food items including white rice, brown rice, sardines, tuna, mackerel, other canned fish, and refined oil.

However, the Council's market surveillance data comprising price comparisons from before and after the duty and VAT removal indicated that consumers paid higher prices despite government's effort to ease the burden. In the absence of stringent monitoring and failure to reflect the policies in the prices of basic food items, consumers continued to pay higher prices.

Despite the challenges posed by the economic crisis and other events, the Council again achieved outstanding results. In 2008, the Council exceeded the targets in the Service Agreement which was set by the Government. The state grant was well utilised with high rate of return. In an effort to meet the demands of consumers and the general public, the Council was compelled to not only strengthen its organisational structure, but also to be ingenious and efficient in the use of state and other resources at its disposal. This has been done with the focus of providing services to consumers and achieving the deliverables to Government.

A notable achievement for 2008 was our successful procurement of much needed funds from the Government of Australia through its international aid agency, AusAID. These funds have helped the Council realise

some of its ambitious activities. Consumers and the general public have directly benefited, as the funds have largely been utilised for the Council's outreach programmes, particularly for the disadvantaged groups in rural areas.

The Council strongly believes that imparting knowledge is the first step towards empowering consumers in Fiji to become aware, critical and responsible to ensure the building of an active consumer society. Therefore, a more consumer responsive education and awareness raising programme was designed in 2008 for a wide range of consumers, especially the young, rural, women and the poor. Fiji's consumers have become more aware of their rights. This is evident from the number of complaints and enquiries that the Council is receiving on a daily basis and from its community awareness outreach programme.

In its endeavour to increase accessibility and visibility the Council launched its own website in May. This provided a valuable and accessible source of not just information, but interaction with consumers, [website: www.consumersfiji.org](http://www.consumersfiji.org).



The Council continues to have a strong presence in the market place by engaging on issues of concern to consumers. We have been proactive and taken on issues that make a real difference in consumers' lives. A few of these notable achievements were: a 378 % output in unpaid radio programmes; and a 239 % success rate in consumer complaints solved through mediation.

Another highlight of 2008 was the launching of a campaign on restaurant hygiene in the capital, Suva which is an ongoing activity. A successful outcome of the campaign was the high level of publicity generated on the issue. This culminated in a first-ever crash course for Suva's restaurant owners conducted by the Training & Productivity Authority of Fiji (TPAF) and the Suva City Council.

The Council voiced its concerns on issues such as the increase in the price of food items; conduct of





Startling discovery: CCF's restaurant campaign finds fish kept in toilets.

telecommunications companies; Vodafone's Carrazy competition; FEA's fuel surcharge on electricity; schools' exclusive dealings; lawyers' fees and charges; taxi fares; unfair trading practices and misleading advertisements. The Council also took the consumer voice to the review on the bus industry and made plain its concerns about the inefficiency in the industry and its impact on consumers.

The Council also worked together with regulatory agencies like the Land Transport Authority (LTA) for consumer education/awareness on bus ticketing, FEA to change the electricity bill to make it easy to understand and the Reserve Bank of Fiji on the issuance of new coins.

In an effort to address gaps in consumer protection and redress, the Council commissioned an AusAID funded study on the Effectiveness of the Small Claims Tribunal.

Consumers have placed their faith in the Council for not only resolving their grievances, but also voicing their concerns and interest in the public arena. The Council has now found itself to be the voice and beacon of hope for consumers, especially in the current economic environment which has put them at risk from unfair trade practices and unscrupulous corporate behaviour.

The accomplishments in this report are testimony to the Council's ability in standing up for consumers during difficult times.

The work undertaken and achievements in 2008 have been realised on the back of a strong organisation and commitment from our staff and those groups and individuals who have strived to help us throughout, despite staffing constraints.



Council with LTA had advertisements on the importance of asking bus fare tickets.

## Accomplishments In 2008

### Campaigns, Information and Media Services

The Council strongly believes that imparting knowledge is the first step towards empowering consumers in Fiji to become aware, critical and responsible to make informed choices about the goods and services they purchase. An educated, well-informed and information-rich consumer population is essential if Fiji is to develop and expand its economy and improve its well-being. Therefore, a more consumer responsive education and awareness raising programme was designed in 2008 for a wide range of consumers, especially young, women and poor in rural and outer islands.

The 2008 consumer education and awareness raising activities continued the trend from 2007 guided mainly by the recommendations of the Fiji Institute of Applied Studies (FIAS) evaluation report on the Council's services. The FIAS report found the need for the Council to expand and improve its education and awareness reach to consumers in the country to make a positive impact in the market place.

### School Initiatives

A total of 21 school visits were made in 2008 reaching 2941 students and 115 teachers, who benefitted directly from information materials, advice and discussions on important day-to-day consumer issues. An important service for schools is assistance provided for student projects and assignments. The Council served a total of 279 students and 29 teachers, not only in providing information and literary materials, but also giving consumer life skills advice for the young consumers. Teacher training and tertiary institutions also benefitted, with the Council delivering 7 lectures at the Lautoka Teachers College and 1 to second-year economics students at the University of the South Pacific, Suva. A total of 457 tertiary students benefitted from these lectures, 300 at the USP and 157 at the Lautoka Teachers College. Copies of the newly



Council staff educating child consumers through school visits.

developed brochures were also distributed to school libraries throughout the three divisions.

**Impact:** Students and teachers benefitted from knowledge gained on consumer issues, and on their rights and responsibilities. A major impact is the degree of interests shown by the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions on the need to empower and equip, with knowledge on consumer issues. The students are better placed to assist their families and friends in dealing with issues. More students expressed their intention to serve Consumer Council as volunteers because of their interests in consumer issues.

### Community Awareness Programme

Community visits is an important activity of the Council which allows accessibility of its services and visibility to local communities often lacking access to consumer information and redress.

The Council conducted a total of 50 community visits during the year, 14 in the Central division, 11 in the Northern division and 22 in the Western division. Council had to initiate 24 of these visits, while 26 were based on direct requests by community groups themselves. A total of 2,403 people in various local communities directly benefitted from the visits which also provided an avenue for participants to raise their concerns directly with Council.



Consumers in outer and rural areas taking advantage of the outreach programme- Mobile Unit.

The Council assisted and conducted 9 workshops throughout the year. Community groups and organisations that sought Council's assistance included local women and religious groups, teachers' groups, Department of Energy, Suva City Council, Community Education Training Centre (CETC) of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and others. Some of the topics covered included the junk food generation, hire

## Total number of workshops

Date	Name of the workshop	Topics	Location
12/3/08	Women's International Day Celebration	Consumer Rights and Responsibilities, Hire Purchase, Lay-By, Money-Lending, Prices of Goods and Services	Nadi
16/9/08	Retired Fijian Teachers Association	Consumer Rights and Responsibilities, elderly bus fare concession, restaurant campaign contribution, cessation of copper coins, FNP Pension	Suva
21/10/09	Department of Energy	Introduction of Energy Efficient Policy for refrigerators in Fiji: Benefits and costs to consumers.	Suva
8/10/08	Ministry of Youth and Sports- Youth Summit	Consumer Rights and Responsibilities, Empowering the Youth Generation of Today, Hire Purchase, lay-By, Money-Lending, Prices of Goods and Services	Lautoka
24/11/08	Restaurant Owners' Workshop organized by SCC	Proposed Restaurant Hygiene Grading System	Suva
14/11/08	Soqosoqo Vakamarama Yasana O Ba	Consumer Rights and Responsibilities, Empowering Rural Communities, Hire Purchase, lay-By, Money-Lending, Prices of Goods and Services	Ba
9/5/08	CETC/SPC Training Centre	Food safety in Fiji	Nasinu
16/10/08	Fiji Head Teachers Conference	Consumer Protection In Fiji: Where Do We Stand?	Ba
14/11/08	Workshop organized by USP-Lautoka Campus PACE Program, Bukama Village School, Yasawa-i-ra	Consumer Rights and Responsibilities, Hire Purchase, lay-By, Money-Lending, Prices of Goods and Services	Yasawa

purchase, how to lodge complaints, consumer rights and responsibilities, and current issues faced by consumers in that area.

The Council also set up mobile units (information/services booths) in various centres, which allowed members of the public to access our services. A total of 35 mobile units were conducted during the year, 7 in the Central/Eastern division, 12 in the Northern division and 16 in the Western division. Consumers received personalized attention to discuss their issues on one-on-one level. Mobile units proved to be one of the better and cost effective ways to reach out to consumers.

**Impact:** Consumers living in urban, rural and outer islands benefitted from awareness raising and education. They have become proactive in raising issues. For example, Fijian listeners requested for sessions on money lending, use of bailiff and hire purchase to understand their rights and responsibilities. Through awareness raising consumers are voicing their grievances on issues affecting them via media and by writing to the Council. Radio hosts are also increasingly asking Council staff to feature in their talk back shows on various consumer issues in the Hindustani, English and Fijian radio programmes.

## Information Initiatives

Information is a very powerful tool that consumers need to better adapt to changing circumstances and problems in the market place. As with the previous year, the Council continued to harness the power of the mass media not only to widely disseminate consumer information, issues of concerns, but also gen-

erate debate and empower consumers on current issues. This is especially important for isolated islands and difficult to access areas in the interior.

A total of 18 paid radio programmes were conducted, 9 Fijian and 9 English. Monthly Hindi radio programmes were provided free of charge by Fiji Broadcasting Corporation Limited. While paid programmes were dependent on necessary funding, the Council was able to secure a total of 681 unpaid programmes with the two radio networks, FBCL and Communications Fiji Limited. A total of 237 programs were in English, 233 in Hindi and 211 programs in Fijian language stations. The unpaid radio airtime totalled 5305 minutes covering 278 issues. The Council featured in 55 television programmes during the year comprising 38 news items, 3 live talk back shows, 7 in-depth programme, 4 on Fiji One's Talk Business programme, 2 in the Aaj Kaal (Hindi) programme and 1 in the Jharokha (Hindi) programme. The media websites featured 131 articles on the Council covering 68 different issues.

**Impact:** Consumers have become more aware of their rights and responsibilities as consumers. This was evident from the number of complaints and enquiries the Council received on a daily basis during the year. Awareness raising has empowered many consumers to come forward and report and seek redress of issues, which otherwise would have been ignored by the concerned trades and service providers. This is a very positive impact.



The Council also had extensive newspaper coverage, with a total of 395 articles published during the year on 218 different issues. On an average it translates to 1.1 articles per day. A total of 315 articles were published in the English language newspapers covering 149 issues, while 41 articles were published in the Fijian newspapers and 39 in the Hindi language publications.

The Council also continued with its quarterly newsletter The "Consumer Wheel", with a total of 4,000 copies printed. In July, the newsletter's title was changed to "Consumer Watch" in an effort to fully capture Council's mandate. To assist in its education, information dissemination and awareness services, the Council produced new brochures – Know Your Electricity Bill, Sales of Goods Act, National Trade & Measurement, Counter Inflation Act, Know your Water Bill and Consumer Protection Agencies.

For the first time, the Council launched a campaign on restaurants 'Make Restaurant Hygiene Your Concern Today' as part of the strategy to make restaurants responsible for providing quality services to consumers. Campaign activities included conducting food tests by the University of the South Pacific's Institute of Applied Sciences (USP-IAS) Laboratory, launching the campaign, mass media coverage and radio advertisements to encourage consumers to support the campaign initiative and become involved by sharing their experiences, observations as well as making suggestions. These were made possible through funding provided by Aus AID.



Complainant brings stale food during Council's Restaurant Hygiene Campaign.

**Impact:** By participating in these local engagements, the Council was able to represent the consumers' view points and most cases was able to influence changes to policies and/or ensuring that consumers are not left out. Through this participation the stakeholders also benefitted from the awareness raised and information and knowledge imparted, which were initially lacking. The requests for participation by various sectors/groups are becoming frequent as the level of awareness increases.

## Key Local Engagements

The Council participated in the following events:

- Fiji Bus Review Stakeholder Consultation organized by LTA to take a holistic reform of the sector/industry, 19th December 2008;
- 2008 National Judicial Conference- Judges and Magistrates- an address delivered on Consumers' Perspective of the Courts, Naviti Resort, Sigatoka- 5th December 2008;
- Role of Consumer Protection discussed at the Sector Consultation on PICTA – Trade in Service organized by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26th November, 2008;
- 7th National Transport Consultative Forum to look at the importance of reforming road and sea transportation in Fiji, 12th November 2008;
- Stakeholder meeting on the Review of the Local Governments in Fiji, 15th September 2008;
- The Phasing of Coins in Fiji and its Impact on Consumers: stakeholder meeting organized by Reserve Bank of Fiji, 9th September 2008;
- 2009 National Economic Summit - Multi-stakeholder meeting organized by Ministry of Justice/Prime Minister's Office to mainly discuss consumers' perspective as contained in the "Peoples Charter" based on our presentation at the NCBBF presentation, 5th September 2008;
- Telecom Regulations Consultative Process organized by Department of Communication to draft telecommunication regulations and setting up of Telecommunication Authority of Fiji, 14th August 2008;
- The Role of Consumer Council in the Current Environment at a Panel Discussion: on the theme "The Global Effects of Rising Prices: What Can We Do? Organized by the Economics Association of Fiji; 28th July 2008 at Tower 11, RBF;



- The Role of Consumer Council of Fiji in Good Governance presentation made at the Republic of Fiji Military Forces, 28th July 2008;
- Health Promotion Council meeting at the Ministry of Health to discuss consumer impact of user pay system, 4th June, 2008;
- Problems with Financial Services Sector, Presentation to the Financial Sector Committee, NCBBF, 24th May 2008; and
- Consumer Protection In Fiji: Where Do We Stand? Presentation to the Financial Sector Committee, NCBBF, 23rd May 2008



The Council received 41 complaints against the Financial Institutions in 2008.



Misleading advertisements - a common problem in Fiji.

## Issues Covered on TV in 2008

TOPICS/ISSUES	SEGMENT	TOPICS/ISSUES	SEGMENT
1. Taxi fare increase	News item	30. Energy pricing and bulk buying of fuel	Talk business
2. Elderly bus fare pass	News item	31. Fuel price/taxi fare increase proposal	Have Your Say
3. Money lending interview	News item	32. Restaurant campaign launch (campaign coverage)	News item
4. Lawyers' fees	News item	33. Consumer Council looks into restaurant complaint	News item
5. Inflation rate understated	News item	34. Public Health Act (campaign coverage)	News item
6. Immigration Agents	News item	35. Lawyers complaints	News item
7. Consumer Issues	Have your say	36. Coin Removal	News item & news break
8. WCRD	News item	37. Vodafone Car-razy Lottery	News item & news break
9. Loss of appliances due to power surge	News item	38. White Rabbit Creamy Candy lollies recall	News item & news break
10. Travel agency services	News item	39. SCC accusing Council for conducting illegal act: Suva restaurants	In-depth report
11. INKK mobile services	News item	40. Consumer issues	Aaj Kal (Hindi program)
12. Nasinu municipal services and class action	News item	41. Food safety standards	Talk business
13. Unfair Trade Practices	Have Your Say Program	42. Jubilee milk	News item
14. State's decision on basic food items	News item	43. Digicel complaints	News item & news break
15. Website and Insurance Study launch	News item & news break	44. FEA crisis	News item
16. Insurance Report findings	In-depth Coverage	45. Council attacks Commerce Commission over Vodafone promotion	News item
17. Ashabhai lolly products - misleading labeling	News item	46. RBF coin cessation	News item
18. Insurance Report findings	Talk Business Program	47. Fuel decrease	News item
19. Council wants gas prices regulated	News item	48. Council on FEA	News item
20. Fuel surcharges - FEA	News item	49. Food grading system	News item & news break
21. Rice price increase	News item	50. Money Lending Research Findings	In-depth report
22. Rising food prices	News item	51. Money Lending Research Findings	News item
23. Suva City Council's new green waste collection policy-Comments	News item & news break	52. 2009 budget reaction	News item
24. SCC new green waste policy collection	News item & News break	53. Money Lending Research Findings	Talk business
25. Misleading advertisement by India In style Showcase	News item	54. Christmas shopping advice	News item
26. Post Fiji Auction	News item	55. Consumer issues	Aaj Kal live program
27. Rush to fill fuel as Consumer Council calls to drop duty on fuel	News item & News break	56. New year advice for consumers	Jharoka program
28. FPNP superannuation- another player in the market	News item	57. Fiji Electricity Authority complaints	News item
29. Fuel price increase - Council's comments	News item		

## Mediation and Consumer Advisory Services

The Council received a total of 1689 formal complaints from consumers around the country in 2008, on an average about 141 complaints per month. The complaints registered for the year had a total monetary value of just over \$3million. Of the total number of complaints, 57% were resolved through mediation. A total of 162 cases were referred to the Small Claims Tribunal (SCT). While mediation is a key function of the Council, advisory services are also widely utilised by consumers and the general public. The Council provided written and in-person advice to 336 people (155 in Suva, 97 in Lautoka and 84 in Labasa). Most of these were from consumers seeking advisory assistance on products, utilities, tenancy, real estate and hire purchases. Selected complaints cases studies were published in the Council's newsletters to raise awareness and as a way of cautioning consumers.

Residential tenancy complaints topped the list of registered cases at 389 or 23%. Other common problems consumers encountered were on: electronic goods, mobile phone services, hire purchase, etc. Residential tenancy and electronic goods are two major areas that continue to record the highest number of complaints over the two-year period beginning in 2007.

**Impact:** The higher number of complaints received from consumers in 2008 (1689) against previous year's (1301), reflecting a 30% increase, denotes increased awareness and confidence of consumers in the Council's ability to resolve issues through mediation and referrals and advice on unresolved cases. The increased visibility and success of the Council in addressing issues has yielded results as consumers are increasingly becoming aware of their rights and responsibilities.



Consumer Complaint: Fruit cake with lizard on it.

### Summary of Consumer Complaints in 2008

Registered consumer complaints	1689 cases - an average of 141 per month
Complaints resolved through mediation	955 cases - an average of 80 per month
Cases assisted and/or referred to Small Claims Tribunal	162 cases - an average of 13.5 cases per month
Cases referred to other consumer protection/ regulatory agencies	147 cases - an average of 12 cases per month
Consumer advice	336 cases - an average of 28 per month
Weak cases	120 cases lacked evidence such as receipts, contracts, etc

### The Most Re-occurring Complaints in 2008

Landlord/Tenant	389	Groceries	43
Electronic goods (computers, etc)	107	Banks & Other Financial Institutes	35
Mobile Services (Vodafone, Digicel, Inkk)	71	Food Items	32
Mobile Product	60	Hardware	32
Fiji Electricity Authority	59	Money Lending	28
Hire Purchase/Lay By	49	Education	28
Second Hand Products	45	Insurance	24

## Research Initiatives

The Council maintains rigorous research practices on important issues affecting consumers. The research work is crucial to the Council's ability to provide evidence-based submissions to government and policy-makers, while also allowing it to effectively develop strategies for appropriate intervention and redress. Apart from research, the Council conducts regular market surveillance, spot surveys and trader visits to keep business practices in check.

### The research activities conducted were:

#### Study on the Small Claims Tribunal (SCT)

- This important research initiated in 2008 was funded by AusAID and undertaken by the Fiji Institute of Applied Studies (FIAS). The main purpose of the study was to gauge the effectiveness of the SCT as the primary judicial consumer redress mechanism in Fiji. The report highlighted several weaknesses such as:
- The SCT Decree limits appeals that is, where a claim is disputed and if it is related to an order of paying money, or an order dismissing a claim, there is no legal provision for an appeal;
- SCT has become a tax payer funded debt collection agency for businesses while consumers have largely not benefitted from SCT. In 1997-2007: 49% of all claims lodged in Suva were claims from businesses;
- SCT Referees need training; and
- SCT awareness is required to encourage more consumers to use SCT services.

**Impact:** The study evaluated effectiveness of the Small Claims Tribunal by providing key findings on the strengths and weaknesses of SCT to assist policy makers in improving SCT services to enable consumers to access justice. This report also provides a platform for the Council to lobby for reform in the area consumer redress.

#### Engaging Internationally

The Council was a partner in the following research survey projects with Consumers International (CI) and other international consumer organisations like International Consumer Research & Testing (ICRT) and Consumers Korea.

	Organization	Survey/Research
1.	ICRT	Cereal Testing
2.	Consumers International	Unhealthy Food Marketing to Children
3.	Consumers Korea	Survey on Consumers' Awareness on Sunscreen and their Usage: Problems with ethylene dicysteate EDC in sunscreen
4.	Consumers International	Issues Paper on Global Consumer Redress

**Impact:** Working with international partners has enabled Council to be current with consumer issues at the international level. The Council benefitted enormously in terms of research skills, funding and was able to utilise best practices to address issues and problems faced by consumers in Fiji.

#### Minor Research

A total of 69 minor research were undertaken in 2008 mostly based on consumer complaints and response on current issues. The research results and papers produced were converted to press releases, used to strengthen Council's submissions to government and policymakers, and disseminated to consumers and interested stakeholders.



Council's price analysis on basic medication revealed huge increases.

## Minor Research

Issues	
Voicemail charges	Telecom charges: billing
Car park fees	Security deposits: FEA
Registration of a Travel company	Bus pass to elderly: who issues card?
Gambling tax	Rise in food prices and its impact on consumers
Garbage fees	Short weight of chicken gible 500g
Increase in taxi fares	Complaints against Easy-Tel
Price control items	Negative impact of mobile phones
Water Supply Dept –billing issue	Inflation rate: Use of old basket of goods
Items sold at high cost - hurricane	Complaints against Goodman and Fielder on giblets
Concerns regarding Flash & Gain card	Fees and charges for immigration service
Adult entertainment product –should it be sold	Food items that fall under “Halal” certification
Payments made to NFA by Water & Sewerage Dept	Market analysis for restaurant rating system
Increase in price of basic food prices	Salt shortage: Survey of supermarkets
Lunch box challenge-ingredients found in food	Rice price change and shortage
Telecom charges on disconnected phones	Issues paper for World Bank
City Council Rates and service not provided	Rice saga: Rules of origin
Yards or meters for measurement: items sold in yards	Bank fees and charges
Underweight food items sold to consumers	Easy Tel Research
Number of complaints against Fiji TV programmes	Sale of chicken feed: Ba Town Council
Flash and Gain EXTRA	Migration services: Dean and Associates
Text spam on prepaid phones	Solicitors used by Financial Institutions
Travel agency services by unknown companies	SMS competition and its legality
Children boat fares	Banking and Lending
Market survey and analysis of zero rated products	Poor TV signal and Poor TV Program
Television services and costs	Bus fare survey: Issuing of tickets
Compare prices of drugs sold off the counter	Investigate the “Star” Products in major supermarkets
Duty rate on healthy foods (imported fruits) and unhealthy foods (imported snacks) Imported confectionary duty rates	Standards or regulation implemented for the importation of goods into Fiji.
Duty rate on food and non-food items	To find out if the bus fare rise was due to the rise in fuel price and in what proportion
Inflation and consumer behavior	SCT referrals by the Council in the last 5 years
Food price hike in recent years	Tariff rates comparison in mobile phone industry.
Bus safety issue: Record for bus accidents	Initiation phase- elderly rights in Fiji
Issues raised by consumers in terms of their 10 year credit listing policy. Data Bureau	Misleading advertisement: Pacific Sun
Melamine wares	Fees charged for issuing Certified Cyclone Engineers Certificates.
Pressure to sign an agreement with the Architect before any drawing or design concept has been shown or approved by potential consumers.	Cooking oil: Claims and types
Faulty Motorola W181 phone	



**Impact:** The minor research work enabled the Council to better address specific consumer complaints and issues in general. The minor research work is complaints driven, thus not only does it assist the Council to address specific or general complaints but also helps in advising consumers to be more responsible, proactive and alert from potential unscrupulous business practices.

## Market Surveillance

The Council visited 247 retailers during 2008 to monitor price changes, business practices, and quality and standard of food and non-food products. The market surveillance allows the Council to inform and alert consumers and relevant consumer protection agencies on any market abuses or unfair trade practices. This regular activity has benefited consumers and kept them well informed of on-going trader practices relating to expired food items, misleading labeling and low quality goods and services. Consumer protection agencies such as the Department of Fair Trading & Consumer Affairs amongst others have also benefited from the Council's market surveillance as issues are regularly referred to them for appropriate action.

**Impact:** The market surveillance has become a major contribution of the Council to the work of regulators and other consumer protection agencies. Council referrals provide not only the impetus for these agencies to act but also allow a bridging of the gaps in monitoring. Consumers have benefitted from being tipped off about unscrupulous traders and unfair trade practices occurring in the market place



Council has continuously raised awareness on unlabeled food items which is a breach of food safety laws in the country

## Submissions

In the past two years, the Council, armed with rigorous research, has stepped its work in analyzing policies affecting consumers and making submissions to

government and key policymakers in order to address the gaps in consumer protection and redress. One of the Council's stated objectives is to carry out on-going research on key consumer issues and consumer protection legislations with the aim of safeguarding and protecting consumer interests by bringing about necessary policy change, where required. In this regard, the Council regularly makes oral and written submissions to various government agencies from the consumer point of view. While a good number of these government ministries and departments recognize the consumer input and invited the Council to make submissions, the Council has in many instances taken the first initiatives after recognizing a key consumer issue. In 2008 the Council made a total of 13 major submissions on behalf of consumers.

### List of Submissions

No	To Authorities/ Agencies	Subject Matter/Issues
1.	Minister for Works, Transport and Public Utilities	Proposed increase in bus fares
2.	Minister for Works, Transport and Public Utilities	Sea route license review
3.	National Fire Authority	Review of National Fire Service Act 1994
4.	Commerce Commission	FHL Acquisition of RB Patel Shares
5.	Land Transport Authority	Bus Fare Submission- Oral Presentation
6.	Prices & Incomes Board	Submission on Fiji Gas Market
7.	Ministry of Finance	Submission on the Budget Consultative Process, 2008-2009
8.	Cabinet Task Force on the Review of Air Pacific	Submission on the Review of Air Pacific
9.	Central Board of Health	Food Safety Regulation Oral Submission
10.	Local Government Review Committee	Submission on the Review and Reform of the Local Government
11.	Commerce Commission	Submission on the Review of Steel Prices
12.	Commerce Commission	Submission on Telecommunications Industry Inquiry
13.	Ministry of Works, Transport and Public Utilities	Submission on the Review of the bus safety issues

**Impact:** The Council's submissions have assisted the policy makers understand consumers' perspectives and issues. This resulted in ensuring that consumers are not adversely affected by the decision. The impact and benefits have filtered to all concerned consumers and agencies as well.

## Corporate Services and Project Management



### Finance

In January 2008, the Council signed a Service Agreement with the Minister for Commerce, Industry, Investment and Communication, which outlined the key result areas and the targets to be achieved. To deliver the targets, the Council received a grant of \$585,032.00 (VAT inclusive) from the government. With this grant, the Council operated three offices located in Suva, Lautoka and Labasa with a staff complement of 20. Over the years, the Council's grant has not increased, despite substantial increase in the volume of work. The Council had to obtain funding from non-government and external sources for its awareness and empowerment activities on consumer rights and responsibilities. In 2008, the Council secured F\$91,550.00 from the Government of Australia to assist the Council in achieving its corporate goals and objectives.

**To meet consumer demand the Council developed four proposals for donor funding in 2008. These were:**

- Proposal to EU for funding on strengthening Consumer Rights in Fiji and Eliminating Unfair Trade Practices through Advocacy and Enforcement of Consumer Protection Laws project;
- Ann Fransen Fund (AFF) Project Proposal on Sustainable Consumption of Electrical Appliances;
- Proposal to AusAID on Access to Justice through Affordable and Reasonable Legal Services and Charges in Fiji; and
- Ann Fransen Fund (AFF) Project Proposal on Application on the Status of the Pharmaceutical Sector in Fiji.

### Human Resources

The Council continued to reap the rewards of the organisational changes implemented in 2007 with increased productivity in major areas of work surpassing the targets and deliverables required of it by the Government under its Service Agreement. Staff resources had improved with a trend towards the recruitment of multi-skilled university graduates and potential candidates judged not only on qualification but commitment to the consumer cause. The outcomes of staff performance are assessed through the impact oriented outputs produced with the consumer population. The Council maintained the policy of 3-year contracts to its Executive and Senior Management Staff to ensure stability and continuity in the leadership of the Council. The Council also engaged the services of student volunteers and interns, not only to help in achieving its goals, but more importantly to nurture a new breed of consumer rights advocates. The performance management system in place has resulted in high outputs and boosted morale of staff in the performance of their duties and responsibilities. Consequently, the Council has acquired a higher degree of trust and respect from the consumers and relevant stakeholders.

### Board Meetings

In 2008, the Council held three (3) Board meetings and one (1) Sub-Committee meeting. The Board continues to play an integral part in the Council's work, setting policy directions for management and also providing appropriate advice and expertise when needed.

### Staff and Management Meetings

Four (4) Staff and three (3) Management meetings were held during the year.

### International Conference/Training/Workshops/Seminars

**A total of five (5) international meetings were attended by the Council staff:**

- Ms. Praneeta Singh was awarded the Rhada Karpatkin Advocacy Internship for 2 months training with Consumer International in London from 25 February to 20 April, 2008;
- Ms. Joshika Samujh attended the Asia Pacific Regional Members Meeting from 18-20 March, 2008 in Malaysia which was funded by Consumer International;

- Ms. Dianne Reddy attended the Workshop on Gender, Youth & Economic Empowerment in the Pacific from 16-17 April, 2008 in Canberra, Australia which was funded by Aus-AID;
- Ms. Premila Kumar attended the 30th ISO COPOLCO Meeting and Workshop on the International Conference on Climate Change, CSR and Capacity Building from 26-29 May, 2008. This meeting was funded by Consumers Korea; and
- Ms. Premila Kumar attended the PHM OZ Workshop and People's Public Health Congress from 6 – 10 July, 2008 in Brisbane, Australia. This was funded by PHM OZ.

## Conclusion

2008 has been another successful year for the Council in terms of achieving its business plan objectives for the year. The Government grant to the Consumer Council was well utilized and the rate of return was much higher. The Council strongly believes that imparting knowledge is the first step towards empowering consumers in Fiji to become aware, critical and responsible to ensure the building of an active consumer society. Therefore, a more consumer responsive education and awareness raising programme was designed in 2008 for a wide range of consumers, especially the young, rural, women and poor. The consumers have become more aware of their rights and responsibilities. This was evident from the number of complaints and enquiries that the Council received in 2008. The consumers have developed trust and confidence in the Council that their grievances can be successfully resolved by the Council through largely mediation and referrals of others to Small Claims Tribunal and others. In some cases, although the number is very small, the Council has not been able to address issues as these were very weak cases. The Council will continue to strive for excellence in years to come by working closely with Government, consumer protection agencies, donors, and other stakeholders in addressing key consumer issues.

## Appreciation

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Chairman and members of the Board for their guidance and support, particularly at a time when the Council was undergoing organizational changes for the better.

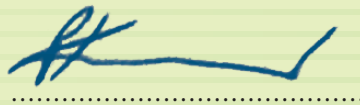
I also wish to thank all the stakeholders---our line Minister and his staff, government ministries/departments, and consumer protection agencies for their support to the Council and for allowing the consumer voice to be heard and appreciated. I also thank the Government for its continuous support towards the

Council with the mandate to serve the consumer interests in Fiji.

My acknowledgement and appreciation goes to the Government of Australia for providing much needed financial assistance in 2008 to help the Council achieve the projects and activities outlined in my report. This assistance was timely and has provided tangible benefits to consumers through the various activities. I also extend my gratitude to our sister consumer organizations abroad and Consumers International for their commitments to help us throughout the year.

A word of thanks also to individuals and volunteers who have helped us during the year either through their direct action or words of support in the consumer cause. I sincerely thank the consumers of Fiji for their support and belief in the Council's mandate to represent their voice.

Finally, without my hard working Management Team and Staff, the accomplishments in 2008 wouldn't have been possible. To them, I say thank you and also challenge them to strive for even better results in the coming years.



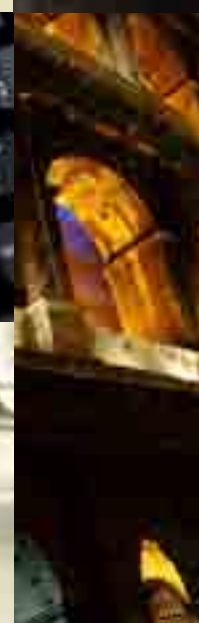
**Premila Kumar**

Chief Executive/Executive Secretary

# FINANCIAL REPORT

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**INDEPENDENT AUDIT REPORT  
CONSUMER COUNCIL OF FIJI  
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2008**

**Scope**

I have audited the financial statements of Consumer Council of Fiji for the year ended 31 December 2008 in accordance with Section 52 of the Consumer Council Act and Section 13 of the Audit Act.

The financial statements consist of the Balance Sheet, Statement of Income and Expenditure, Statement of Changes in Equity, Statement of Cash Flows and the accompanying notes. The Council is responsible for the preparation and presentation of the financial statements and the information contained therein.

I have conducted an independent audit of these financial statements in order to express an opinion on them.

My audit has been conducted in accordance with the Fiji Standards 011 Auditing to provide reasonable assurance as to whether the financial statements are free of material misstatements. My audit procedures included examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting the amounts and other disclosures in the financial statements and the evaluation of accounting policies and significant accounting estimates. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion as to whether, in all material respects, the financial statements are presented fairly in accordance with the Fiji Accounting Standards and statutory requirements so as to present a view which is consistent with my understanding of the Council's financial position, the results of its operations and its cash flows.

The audit opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.


**Audit Opinion**

In my opinion, the financial statements present fairly the financial position of the Consumer Council of Fiji as at 31 December 2008 and the result of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended.

Without qualification to the opinion expressed above, attention is drawn to the following:

1. The MYOB creditors' ledger balance did not reconcile with the creditors' listing confirmations, resulting in a variance of \$14,229.
2. A variance of \$18,252 was noted from the salaries and wages reconciliation undertaken and the audited figure.

I have obtained all the information and explanations which, to the best of my knowledge and belief, were necessary for the purposes of my audit.

  
Tevita Bolanavanua  
**ACTING AUDITOR-GENERAL**  
3 February 2010



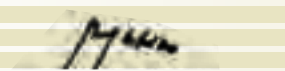
**CONSUMER COUNCIL OF FIJI  
BALANCE SHEET  
AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2008**


	<b>Note</b>	<b>31 December 2008 \$</b>	<b>31 December 2007 \$</b>
<b><u>Current Assets</u></b>			
Cash on Hand	2	119,156	77,849
Refundable Deposits		4,754	4,654
Other Debtors	3	4,812	4,137
Prepayments		2,544	3,092
Deferred Finance Charges	9	4,368	4,368
VAT Receivable		835	-
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		<b>136,469</b>	<b>94,100</b>
<b><u>Non Current Assets</u></b>			
Deferred Finance Charges	9	7,644	13,177
Fixed Assets (Less Depreciation)	4	88,128	81,488
<b>Total Non Current Assets</b>		<b>95,772</b>	<b>94,665</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>232,241</b>	<b>188,765</b>
<b><u>Current Liabilities</u></b>			
Accounts Payables & Accruals	6	43,973	25,073
VAT Payable		-	6,742
Provision for Annual Leave		6,716	9,073
Reimbursed Deposits		2,758	2,758
Grants Payable		106,634	71,304
Deferred Grant		88,128	81,488
Lease Liability		525	4,815
Loan	7	9,923	11,640
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>		<b>258,657</b>	<b>212,893</b>
<b><u>Non Current Liabilities</u></b>			
Loan	7	7,088	32,010
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<b>265,745</b>	<b>244,903</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>(33,504)</b>	<b>(56,138)</b>
<b>Represented By :</b>			
<b>Reserves and Equity</b>			
Asset Revaluation Reserve		(78,011)	(100,646)
Accumulated Funds		44,508	44,508
<b>TOTAL RESERVES AND EQUITY</b>		<b>(33,503)</b>	<b>(56,138)</b>

(The accompanying notes are to be read in conjunction with the Financial Statements)

**Councils Statement**

In our opinion, the financial statements have been drawn up as to give a true and a fair view of the state of affairs, operations and cash flows of the Consumer Council of Fiji for the year ended 31 December 2008.

  
for Mr. Narendra Padarath  
Chairman  
Date: 3 / 2 / 10

  
Ms. Premila Devi Kumar  
Chief Executive Officer  
Date: 3 / 2 / 10

**CONSUMER COUNCIL OF FIJI**  
**STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2008**

	Note	31 December 2008 \$	31 December 2007 \$
<b>Income</b>			
Fiji National Training Council Grant		-	250
Grant from Government of Fiji		560,192	520,029
Other Grants		7,609	99,843
Sundry Income		2,980	834
Deferred Grant Income		20,178	20,487
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>590,959</b>	<b>641,443</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Advertising		4,858	3,378
Audit Fees		4,200	3,821
Bank Charges		759	659
Council Expenses		8,951	15,546
Depreciation		20,178	20,487
Electricity and Water		11,312	8,584
Entertainment		228	501
TPAF		2,964	3,430
Insurance		493	2,657
Interest		4,676	4,984
Legal Fees		333	2,817
Loss on disposal of Fixed Assets		-	344
Office Expenses, Stationery & Publication		9,702	12,266
Research		110	85
Rent and Rates		50,200	50,200
Repairs on Office Equipment, Furniture & Fittings		4,498	1,818
Retired and Expensed Assets		-	323
Running Expenses - Motor Vehicles		7,908	8,316
Salaries, Wages & Related Payments		361,723	354,733
FNPF Expenses		14,221	-
Subscription		2,636	2,226
Sundries		1,608	723
Telephone & Postage Charges		15,296	19,256
Training Expenses		1,616	2,770
Travelling Expenses		10,835	10,309
World Consumer Rights Day		1,964	814
Workshop & Seminars		-	2,636
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>541,270</b>	<b>533,683</b>
<b>Net Surplus / (Deficit) for the year</b>		<b>49,689</b>	<b>107,760</b>

The statement of accumulated funds is to be read in conjunction with the notes to and forming part of the financial statement.

CONSUMER COUNCIL OF FIJI  
STATEMENT OF ACCUMULATED FUNDS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2008

	31 December 2008	31 December 2007
	\$	\$
Accumulated funds brought forward	(100,646)	(117,092)
Less: Correction of Fundamental Errors	(27,054)	(91,314)
Net Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	49,689	107,760
<b>Accumulated Funds carried forward</b>	<b>(78,011)</b>	<b>(100,646)</b>

The statement of accumulated funds is to be read in conjunction with the notes to and forming part of the financial statements.



**CONSUMER COUNCIL OF FIJI  
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2008**

	<b>Note</b>	<b>31 December 2008 \$</b>	<b>31 December 2007 \$</b>
<b>Cash Flows from Operating Activities</b>			
Receipts from customers		597,191	518,113
Payments to suppliers and employees		(485,124)	(465,305)
Interest and bank charges		(5,435)	(5,643)
Prepayments		-	(1,440)
Net Vat paid		(7,577)	1,005
<b>Net cash provided by Operating Activities</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>99,055</b>	<b>46,730</b>
<b>Cash flows from Investing Activities</b>			
Payment for property, plant and equipment		(26,818)	(12,551)
<b>Net cash used in Investing Activities</b>		<b>(26,818)</b>	<b>(12,551)</b>
<b>Cash flows from Financing Activities</b>			
Repayment of Loan		(26,640)	(11,640)
Payments for lease finance		(4,290)	-
<b>Net cash provided by Financing Activities</b>		<b>(30,930)</b>	<b>(11,640)</b>
<b>Net Decrease in Cash &amp; Cash Equivalents</b>		<b>41,307</b>	<b>22,539</b>
Cash and Cash Equivalent at the Beginning of the Year		77,849	55,310
<b>Cash and Cash Equivalent at the End of the Year</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>119,156</b>	<b>77,849</b>

The statement of accumulated funds is to be read in conjunction with the notes to and forming part of the financial statement.

**CONSUMER COUNCIL OF FIJI**  
**NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2008**

**Note 1: Summary of Significant Accounting Policies**

Set out hereunder are the significant accounting policies adopted by the Council in the preparation of the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2008. Unless otherwise stated, similar policies were adopted in the previous year.

**(a) Basis of Accounting**

The accrual basis of accounting has been adopted for all the financial transactions. The accounts have been prepared using the historical cost convention, which permits the revaluation of non-current assets but otherwise has no regards to changes in the price levels.

**(b) Depreciation**

Depreciation has been provided using straight line method to write off the assets over their useful lives.

The principal rates adopted are:

Furniture & Fittings	10-15% per annum
Office Equipment	10-25% per annum
Motor Vehicle	10% per annum

**(c) Income Tax**

The Council is exempted from income tax in accordance with the provisions of section 8 of the Consumer Council Act (Cap 235).

**(d) Value Added Tax (VAT)**

The statement of financial performance and statement of cashflows have been prepared so that all components are settled exclusive of VAT.

**(e) Cash and cash equivalents**

Cash and cash equivalents are carried in the balance sheet at cost. For the purposes of cash flow statement, cash and cash equivalents comprise of petty cash and cash at bank.

**(f) Employee Benefits**

(i) All employees who are Fiji Citizens are members of the Fiji National Provident Fund, an independent statutory administered fund. The Council has no liability for current or past activities.

(ii) The amounts expected to be paid to employees for the pro-rata entitlement to long services, annual and sick leaves are accrued annually at current pay rates having regard to experience of employee's departures and period of service.

**(g) Deferred Grant**

Grants that compensate the council for expenses incurred are recognised as revenue in the income statement on a systematic basis in the same periods in which the expenses are incurred. Grants that compensate the Council for the cost of an asset are recognised in the income statement as revenue on a systematic basis over the useful life of the asset.

**(h) Audit Fees**

An amount of \$4,200 were provided during the year to account for the 2008 Audit fees. This has been included in expenses and accruals as at balance date.

**(i) Comparative Figures**

Previous years figures have been regrouped where necessary for comparison purposes.

**CONSUMER COUNCIL OF FIJI  
NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2008**

	Note	31 December 2008 \$	31 December 2007 \$		
Note 2	Cash on Hand & at Bank				
	Petty Cash	564	600		
	Cash at Bank:				
	- Operating Account No 1462895	18,232	3,543		
	- Trust Account No 1462884	100,360	73,706		
		<u>119,156</u>	<u>77,849</u>		
Note 3	Other Debtors				
	Accountable Advances	1,111	250		
	Other Debtors	3,701	3,887		
		<u>4,812</u>	<u>4,137</u>		
Note 4	Property, Plant and Equipment				
(i)	Fixed Assets are stated at cost and have been included in the accounts on the following basis:				
	Furnitures & Fittings	9,199	9,199		
	Less: provision for depreciation	(4,181)	(2,877)		
		<u>5,018</u>	<u>6,322</u>		
	Office Equipment	80,132	73,314		
	Less: provision for depreciation	(53,389)	(39,332)		
		<u>26,743</u>	<u>33,982</u>		
	Motor Vehicles	66,500	46,500		
	Less: provision for depreciation	(10,133)	(5,316)		
		<u>56,367</u>	<u>41,184</u>		
	Total Carrying Value	<u>88,128</u>	<u>81,488</u>		
(ii)	Reconciliation of the carrying amounts of each class of property, plant and equipment at the beginning and end of the current financila year is set as follows:				
		Furniture & Fittings	Office Equipment	Motor Vehicle	Total
	Carrying Amount as at 31/12/07	6,322	33,982	41,184	81,488
	Additions	-	6,818	20,000	26,818
	Revaluation	-	-	-	-
	Depreciations	(1,304)	(14,057)	(4,817)	(20,178)
	Carrying Amount as at 31/12/08	<u>5,018</u>	<u>26,743</u>	<u>56,367</u>	<u>88,128</u>

**CONSUMER COUNCIL OF FIJI**  
**STATEMENT OF ACCUMULATED FUNDS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2008 (Continued...)**

	31 December 2008 \$	31 December 2007 \$
<b>Note 5 Reconciliation of Net Cash Provided by Operating Activities to Operating Surplus</b>		
Net Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	49,689	86,612
Depreciation	20,178	20,487
Disposal of assets	583	-
Loss on disposal of assets	-	344
Provision for Employee entitlements	2,357	-
Deferred Grant Income	(20,178)	-
Prior Years Adjustment	-	660
(Increase)/Decrease in Other Debtors	(675)	3,489
(Increase)/Decrease in Deposits	(100)	(40)
(Increase)/Decrease in Prepayments	548	(1,400)
(Increase)/Decrease in Deferred finance charges	-	-
Increase/(Decrease) in Accounts Payables & Accruals	11,323	(97,017)
Increase/(Decrease) in Provisions	-	(1,816)
Increase/(Decrease) in Reimbursed Deposits	-	(194)
Increase/(Decrease) in Deferred grant	-	1
Increase/(Decrease) in Grant - Aus aid project	35,330	39,456
Increase/(Decrease) in lease liability	-	(3,852)
Increase/(Decrease) in other liabilities	-	-
<b>Net Cash Provided by Operating Activities</b>	<b>99,055</b>	<b>46,730</b>
<b>Note 6 Accounts Payables and Accruals</b>		
Accounts Payable	25,141	11,219
Accruals	18,832	13,854
	<b>43,973</b>	<b>25,073</b>
<b>Note 7 Loan - Credit Corporation Limited</b>		
Current	9,923	11,640
Non Current	7,088	32,010
	<b>17,010</b>	<b>43,650</b>

The Council obtained a financing arrangement with the Credit Corporation (Fiji) Limited to purchase a new Hyundai 4x4 wagon vehicle payable within a five year term with an interest rate of 12% per annum. The new vehicle is held as collateral over the term of the loan.



**CONSUMER COUNCIL OF FIJI**  
**NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2008 (Continued...)**

	<b>Note</b>	<b>31 December 2008 \$</b>	<b>31 December 2007 \$</b>
<b>Note 8 Expenditure Commitments</b>			
Finance lease commitments for the new photocopier is payable as:			
Not later than one year		525	2,889
Later than one year and not later than five years		-	8,667
		<u>525</u>	<u>11,556</u>
<b>Note 9 Deferred Finance Charges</b>			
Current		4,368	4,368
Non Current		<u>7,644</u>	<u>13,177</u>
		<u>12,012</u>	<u>17,545</u>

Deferred finance charges include interest payable on the leased photocopier of the Council acquired from Abacus Graphics in 2006.

**Note 10 Principal Activities**

The principal purpose of the Council is to provide the protection and promotion of consumer interests, informing consumers of their rights and responsibilities and mobilising consumers to achieve fairness and safety in the marketplace.

**Note 11 Council Details**

(i) Registered Office and Principle Place of Operation

The registered office and principal place of operation of the Council is located at:  
 4 Carnarvon Street  
 Private Mail Bag  
 Suva

(ii) Staff Establishment

As at balance date, total of 17 employees were employed by the Council.

## CONSUMER RIGHTS

- **The right to satisfaction of basic needs** - the right to basic goods and services which guarantee survival;adequate food, clothing, shelter, health care, education and sanitation.
- **The right to safety** - the right to be protected against the marketing of goods or the provision of services which are hazardous to health and life.
- **The right to be informed** - the right to be protected against honest or misleading advertising or labelling. And the right to be given the facts and information needed to make an informed choice.
- **The right to choose** - the right to choose products and services at competitive prices with an assurance of satisfactory quality.
- **The right to be heard** - the right to express consumer interest in the making and execution of government policies.
- **The right to redress** - the right to be compensated for misrepresentation, shoddy goods or unsatisfactory services.
- **The right to consumer education** - the right to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to be an informed consumer.
- **The right to a healthy environment** - the right to live and work in an environment which is neither threatening nor dangerous and which permits a life of dignity and well-being.
- **The right to service** - the right to receive the highest possible standard of service from public and private sector service providers regardless of consumers income and irrespective of whether they live in an urban or rural area.



CONSUMER COUNCIL OF FIJI

## ANNUAL REPORT 2008

### Remove surcharge, says Council

The Fiji Electricity Authority (FEA) should reduce or completely remove its fuel surcharge, the Consumer Council of Fiji said today.

Council's chief executive officer Premila Kumar today said the wet weather coupled with increasing price of fuel warrants their call. "There is absolutely no reason why consumers should continue to be burdened with paying FEA surcharge, especially the Monasavu Dam is indicating sufficient levels that enables electricity ration."

In addition, government increased the fuel rebate from four cents per litre to 10c per litre," she said. Ms Kumar said consumers paid FEA more than they could afford to. "They are paying for the cost of fuel to FEA through their taxes, the fuel surcharge, the tariff rate and VAT."

"The government surely cannot ignore the plight of consumers in regards to the various areas of payment," she said while the statement by FEA boss Hamsukh Patel was a relief but not bring relief to the pockets of consumers, who

### FEA must come out with the truth: CCF

The Consumer Council of Fiji is calling on the Fiji Electricity Authority (FEA) to come out with the truth on what it is now terming as a "looming power crisis".

Council chief executive officer (CEO) Premila Kumar said FEA had completed some of its major renewable energy projects namely the Wainakasou Hydro Station, Nagado Hydro station, Butoni Wind Farm and Tropik Drasa.

These projects she said were understood to compensate for Fiji's reliance on diesel generated energy.

"If Monasavu Dam is said to be performing poorly, these other

projects are set up and should ensure that a higher percentage of energy is produced from renewable sources than from diesel usage," said Ms Kumar.

She said Fiji consumers could not be fooled with the same old trick used by FEA to blame nature for its negligence.

FEA chief executive officer Hamsukh Patel said the average rainfall experienced in Monasavu in the last six years for the month of September was 400mm. However, only 200mm of rain fell in Monasavu in the month of September 2008 which is 50 per cent of the average rainfall for the last six years. The council said rainfall

statistics over a period of five years clearly indicated FEA was trying to create urgency and uneasiness amongst the consumers of Fiji.

"Rainfall statistics over a five year period from 2004 to 2008 clearly indicates that FEA is trying to create urgency amongst consumers by announcing a possible power crisis."

The council she says simply fails to understand the low water level at the Monasavu dam and therefore FEA's low percentage of energy generation from hydro; especially given that the Monasavu rainfall statistics for 2004 was the lowest recorded rainfall ever in the past 24 years.

### Concern over food stalls

□ NANISE VOLAU

THE Consumer Council of Fiji has expressed concern about food safety practices at the many food stalls at various public events around Suva City.

While, the sizzling aroma of food from Fuminal Park, Albert Park and the Laucala Bay area is attracting a large number of hungry stomachs daily, the preparation of foods and drinks is worrying the council.

officers would monitor the situation.

The Consumer Council is using the opportunity during this festive week to promote its food safety campaign and is also monitoring vendors.

"The Council is pleased to note that the Ministry of Health is alert about the food stalls and has acted to issue cautionary advice to both vendors and consumers," said Kumar.

"The council echoes the health ministry's call

### Consumer watchdog hails food campaign

The Consumer Council of Fiji has received 17 complaints from consumers regarding food bought from restaurants and cafes

been successful in providing redress to all complainants.

The Ministry of Health, the respective municipality and the concerned food

### Consumer council slams bus operators

ONE of the country's consumer protection agency, the Consumer Council of Fiji says it is shocked with the call made by the Fiji Bus Operators (FBOA) president Pyara Singh for the interim Government to scrap the council and the Prices and Incomes Board.

"Mr Singh made this call because he is of the view that the two consumer protection agencies are oblivious of the rising fuel prices and its effect on the bus industry. It's unsurprising that consumers in Fiji are suffering because of such perspectives held by the likes of Mr Singh," council Chief Executive Officer Premila Kumar said in a statement released yesterday.

Kumar said that the FBOA president's did not know what the council was all about. "To the full knowledge of the council, it is executing the tasks assigned under the

consumers?" Kumar said. Kumar said Singh should know that the council PIB had organised a workshop with the FBOA Secretariat to educate stakeholders on movement of the global pricing, the determination of fuel prices in Fiji and implications of an increase on every sector of the society.

Kumar reiterated that businesses do suffer when fuel price increases, however, their suffering in no way be compared to that of consumers as businesses on the costs to consumers through the trickle down factor, doubling the burden on consumers."

"In the case of the industry in Fiji, the council has been maintaining stance on the fact that a price hike should not be considered in isolation, justify an increase in fares," Kumar said.

# CONSUMER COUNCIL OF FIJI

## Chief Executive / Executive Secretary

### Personal Assistant

Research & Policy Division  
**Manager Research & Policy Analyst**  
Senior Research Officer  
Research Officer  
Assistant Officer

ADR & Consumer Advisory Division  
**Manager - ADR & Consumer Advisory**  
Consumer Advisory Officer  
Consumer Advisory Assistant

Administration, Finance &  
Project Management Division  
**Director**  
Clerical Officer  
Registry/Database  
Receptionist  
Driver/Messenger/Cleaner

Campaigns, Information  
& Media Division  
**Manager-Campaigns, Information  
& Media**  
Consumer Officer (Hindi)  
Consumer Officer (Fijian)

Labasa Regional Office  
**Coordinator**  
Consumer Assistant-Fijian  
Consumer Assistant-Hindi

Lautoka Regional Office  
**Coordinator**  
Consumer Assistant-Fijian  
Consumer Assistant-Hindi

### Suva Office (QH)

Ming Building, 4 Carnavon Street

P Private Mail Bag

T (679) 330 0792 | (679) 331 0183 | (679) 330 5864

F (679) 330 0115

M Campaigns, information & Media Division - 971 6263

Alternative Dispute Resolution & Consumer Advisory Division - 971 6603

Administration, Finance & Project Management Division - 975 6227

E [complaints@consumersfiji.org](mailto:complaints@consumersfiji.org)

W [www.consumersfiji.org](http://www.consumersfiji.org)

### Lautoka Office

Suite 4, Popular Building, Vidilo Street

P P.O.Box 5396, Lautoka

T (679) 666 4987

F (679) 665 2846

M (679) 926 2807

E [consumerltk@connect.com.fj](mailto:consumerltk@connect.com.fj)

### Labasa Office

Lot 18 Jaduram Street

P P.O.Box 64, Lautoka

T (679) 881 2559

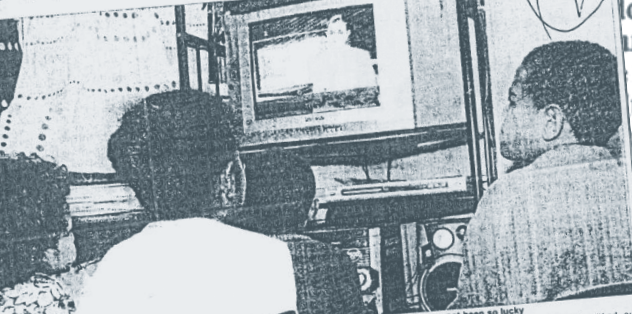
F (679) 881 2559

E [colbs@connect.com.fj](mailto:colbs@connect.com.fj)



कौंसिल को चेतानि  
कौंसिल ऑफ फीजी ने सभी  
ग्राहकों को चेतानि दी है कि पिछले  
कुछ महीनों के अन्दर, कई तरह से लोग  
दामों की वृद्धि का सामना कर रहे हैं और  
हायबिस्क्स के समय उन्हें बहुत ही सोच  
समझकर खर्च करना चाहिए।  
कौंसिल ने कहा कि बिजली के बिल,  
वाओं की दरों में वृद्धि, बस के भाड़ों में  
वृद्धि आदि से ग्राहकों पर असर हुआ है  
यह अच्छा होगा कि उपभोक्ता,  
ना खर्च सोच समझकर करें।  
ग्राहकों से वे मांग कर रही है कि जो  
भी वे खरीदें, सभी के लिए रसीद  
करना न भूलें।

## Council has a go at TV



A family in front of the television in Suva. Television viewers in the North have not been so lucky.

By SERAFINA SILAITOGA

"The complaints lodged at their office via telephones from the people in the North and in the Letters to the Editor in the newspapers should have made them realise that they needed to notify the viewers."

She said complaints had also been lodged at her office which resulted in her first discussion with the company representatives with this week.

"We had a discussion with them and I told them that they needed to notify their consumers and that should have been done earlier," she said.

"Fiji TV needs to be more customer focused and the delay in notifying the northern viewers only shows how they value the people of the North and that's not how customers are to be treated."

She said the company had a role to play in servicing the free-to-air channel and whether there was a transmission problem or any other kinds of fault, viewers should at no time, be deprived of the services.

"That is part of the licence and the free-to-air service should always be maintained to the customers irrespective of the situation because their licence expectation because their website, radio and other advertisers as soon as the problem was experienced."

Fiji TV corporate manager Tamariki Digital said there was a technical fault at the station in Delakoro, Cakaudrove where the company station sits. "And our biggest challenge was to have spare parts arrive on time from overseas but that has not happened as that contributed to the length of time in which the TV programs were not aired."

"So our technicians have come up with another option while waiting for the parts to arrive and by tomorrow afternoon (today), the programs will be back to normal in the free-to-air service channel," Ms Digital said.

She said they notified the viewers through their website, radio and other advertisers as soon as the problem was experienced.

■ Cartoon: Page 6

## Shelves stock poor products

THE Consumer Council of Fiji says market surveys have found that many food products sold in supermarkets are of poor quality.

The council adds that customers in Fiji are served up a very poor standard of onions, potatoes, flour, sharps, lentils, spices, canned foods and other items.

Council chief executive Premila Kumar said this was caused by the lack of responsibility on the part of retailers as well as health inspectors being bribed to look the other way.

Ms Kumar said this was the result of the tradition in Fiji in which monopolies and importers had a strong influence over customers' choices and products.

Even though clearly defined in the Sales of Goods Act, Ms Kumar said retailers constantly ignored or neglected their responsibility and continued to sell standard products to the people.

"The market surveillance in supermarkets are of poor quality," she said.

She said that many of the products that are rotten onions and other items are shown to them.

## Council calls for further reduction

THE Consumer Council of Fiji has called on local authorities to be more vigilant in monitoring global oil prices.

This comes as world oil prices continued to tumble overnight, falling to a four-year low in London. On London's InterContinental Exchange (ICE), the price of crude fell as low as \$11.50 a barrel.



## People have opted to use firewood after the recent increase of the price of kerosene.

A shipping company says it will not be affected by the recent fuel price reduction. The Shipping Line Limited managing director Justin Smith said yesterday the company would not be affected at all as the prices of diesel remained the same.

"We run on diesel fuel and the price has not changed so the reduction in the price of petrol has no effect on the company," he said.

"We have remained at our pricing levels and businesses to adapt to and accept. Indications are that world fuel prices are on the way down which the country should start to feel in the next month or so."

Consumer Amy Whippy said it was a good sign as people continued to face a lot of problems financially.

"However, there are people out there who will be paying more for kerosene especially those who rely on it for their daily cooking."

"With the third term just beginning most of us parents have school fees to pay, daily traveling expenses and lunch money to budget for the children who are at school."

## Kerosene price, says Council

By SANDRA AH SAM

The Consumer Council of Fiji sympathises with consumers who rely heavily on kerosene since they will be paying a higher price as of yesterday.

Chief executive officer Premila Kumar said those who used kerosene in their everyday lives would be affected the most paying two cents more.

"The high retail price will hurt the consumers reliant on the product for cooking and lighting purposes," said Ms Kumar.

"The council therefore believes that the kerosene price should also have been considered and revised downwards given that many consumers continue to rely heavily on this commodity."

"The price of kerosene increases from \$2.03 to \$2.05 as of Tuesday. However the council welcomes the reduction announcement by Prices and Incomes Board to monitor the application of the new prices to ensure suppliers and traders do not defy its decision and that consumers benefit from the reduction," said Ms Kumar.

Ms Kumar said the council maintained its call to the PIB to consider reviewing the petroleum prices on a fortnightly basis.

"The fortnightly review process would better reflect the global market movement of the commodity and the prices, in the case of increase, would be at least having minimal impact on the wallet of consumers," said Ms Kumar.

Monthly reviews to be immediately responsive to the global market.

## Kauwai na kama ni basi mai Nadroga

E kauwai sara vakalevu na Matabose ni Dauvotivoli ena ega vakacalaka e gaunisala a mai yaco e na mua ni pacawa sa oti e na kena a ama e dua na basi ni Raiwaga e na dua na tolo ni sala mai Nadroga ka vakavuna na nodratou mate e lewe tini na kena pasidia.

E levu na gauna e da sa dau ai yavalaga e na gauna esa aco oti kina e dua leqa. Sa ka ibi kina me na laurai ka vakayacori e so na ka e dodonu me caka me na level kina eso na vel leqa va qo.

E tokona sara vakalevu na Matabose na vakatutu mai na Matabose ni Velakoyaki e Vanua Mamaca se na 'LTA' me na dikeva na I tuvaki ni basi e na vel-yano na vula ka sega ni vakadua ga e na vel-yabaki me vaka ka dau vakayacori tiko mai lu.

E a sa dau velvakasalataki tiko mai na Matabose ena velgauna sa oti e na nodra taqomaki na lewenivanua e na kena cauraki tiko na I tuvaki ni basi kara cicil tiko e na nodra velgaunisala.

E kila deivaki tu na Matabose ni sega ni toso cake wale ga ni I sausa ni waiwai e dau laki vakavuna na nodra dau vinakata na kabani ni basi me tosoi cake kina na I vododoni ni basi.

E bibi tale ga na kena dau laurai na I tuvaki ni basi e na nodra qaravi na lewenivanua raraba.

E dodonu me dau dikevi sara vakavina e dua na basi kei na kena idini ni bera ni vakadonuni me tekivutaka usani ira na lewenivanua.

E matata vinaka tu vei keda na lewenivanua dau vodobasi ni so na basi ka ra cicil tiko qo e gaunisala e qara tu mada ga na dagona, so e dau kaburaka mai na kubou loaloa ka so e laurai ni dau drede mada ga vei ira na draiva me ra dau velsautaka na kena qila.

Sa dodonu me na raica sara vakayalomatua na LTA e so na vel leqa laiai va qo.

E dodonu tale ga me raica na LTA na nodra dau tuake tug e loma ni basi e so na pasidia ka rawa ni vakavu leqa e na gauna ni vakacalaka e gaunisala.

E dodonu tale ga me raica na velkabani ni basi na kena vakabeletitaki na I dabedabe ni basi me vuke na maroro ni nodra bula na lewenivanua.

NAI LALAKAI — VAKARAUBUKU

## In the case of the

## Beware of junk food, warns Council

The Consumer Council of Fiji will be joining consumer organisations around the world to celebrate World Consumer Rights Day.

The celebration will take place next week which will provide an opportunity for the council to campaign on this year's theme 'Junk food generation - advertising and marketing of unhealthy food to children in Fiji'.

Premila Kumar yesterday said that several surveys conducted indicated that advertising and marketing of food and drink to children was dominated by unhealthy products.

"Manufacturers, suppliers and retailers of these foods are increasingly using integrated and sophisticated advertising and marketing strategies to promote their products directly and indirectly to children," Ms Kumar said. "Familiar

examples are of such marketing include the use of collecting toys, games and contests, advertising and packaging cartoon characters, food shaped and coloured to be especially appealing to children and the use of catchy jingles."

Evidently, Ms Kumar said these 'unhealthy' foods contain high levels of fat, sugar and salt and have a direct effect on the health of children.

# Consumers urged to spend money wisely

Consumers need to spend their money wisely this festive season, says Consumer Council Chief Executive Officer Premila Kumar.

Ms Kumar said consumers should concentrate on providing for their families needs and not to be trapped into buying persuasive

They should avoid impulse purchases and overspending of their money," she said.

She reminded consumers to collect receipts of all their purchases and seek prior information about a product they intend to buy.

Meanwhile the Council had dealt with a number of dissatisfied consumers during this festive season.

She said consumers must exercise their consumer rights if traders let them down.

in the bus industry itself. Bus companies