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Consumer Council of Fiji



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20 March, 2020

## PRESS RELEASE

### Council Urges Consumers to be Considerate

Fears about a positive coronavirus (COVID-19) case led shoppers in Fiji to begin stocking up on supplies to fill pantries. As soon as the news circulated on social media platform, people flocked out in numbers for grocery shopping across the country. An influx of general customers saw queues and shelves emptied at supermarkets on Thursday, 19 March.

There have been reports of aggressive panic buying in several supermarkets, pharmacies and mini-markets. There were no parking spaces, shelves got empty in few minutes and there were long queues to make payments.

Panic buying has an immediate effect – crucial food stuffs quickly become unavailable. This shortage would particularly be felt by the vulnerable members of society. There is also another negative consequence – shortages cause retailers to hike up prices.

During these difficult times of movement restrictions announced by the government to curb the spread of the COVID-19, it is now time for Fijian consumers to support each other, be considerate and provide extra assistance to the vulnerable groups in the society.

“We know that that many of you are worried about the spread of COVID-19. However, the government, relevant authorities, supermarkets and the suppliers are working together to make sure that you and your families can have the food and essentials you need” said the Chief Executive Officer Seema Shandil.

However, during this challenging time, it is also important that we consider the plight of the vulnerable members of the community – the elderly and the disabled. Should the panic buying continue, the Consumer Council of Fiji would also like to call upon the supermarkets and mini markets to allocate special time for the vulnerable members of the society to do their shopping before the crowd is in (similar to what our counterparts in the world are doing).

Consumers also have an important role to play and the country needs your help too. The Council once again urges everyone to be considerate in the way they shop. We understand your concerns but buying more than is needed can sometimes mean that others will be left without. There is enough for everyone if we all work together.



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Additionally, while we are pushing forward to get our groceries and our other essentials, wherever possible, let us give way and show our concern and care for the safety and well-being of the vulnerable members of our society.

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**Seema Shandil**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Consumer Council of Fiji**