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18 October, 2018

PRESS RELEASE

Council calls on traders to be honest

The Consumer Council of Fiji is advising traders to refrain from price gouging on disaster essential goods as parts of Fiji brace for adverse weather conditions and flooding heading into the weekend.

During periods of Natural Disaster, certain items like canned food, clean bottled drinking water, ropes, tents and batteries for radios and torches become essential.

Other items that consumers generally buy in preparation for the adverse weather include batteries, candles, hurricane lanterns and lamps, chargers and lights, ropes, building materials, generators, tarpaulin, tents, carpentry and electrical tools and matches.

And while Government has already advised consumers to have these items ready, the Council urges traders not to take advantage of consumers by hiking prices of these goods.


Sadly the Council has noted that price gouging during adverse weather periods is a common occurrence. This was evident earlier this year following TC Josie and TC Keni. Unfortunately traders took advantage of this period and of the Government assistance provided afterwards to increase prices and take advantage of already suffering Fijians.

This unscrupulous behaviour is unacceptable and the Council urges traders to assist consumers instead of trying to take advantage of them. Increasing prices during natural disasters amounts to unfair trade practices particularly under Section 66 and 76 of Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission Act 2010.

Not only is price gouging illegal, it decreases the ability of lower income earners to gain access to essential goods in periods of adverse weather. Indeed in this time of high demand for certain goods, offering competitive and even discounted prices would not only earn the consumers trust, but offer the opportunity of return business.

Consumers are also advised not to leave shopping for their Natural Disaster supplies to the last minute. It is advisable to have a kit ready with all necessary items prior to Fiji's disaster season and ensure that the supplies are checked regularly.

Consumers who come across instances of traders price gouging can contact the National Consumer Helpline on 155 to lodge a complaint.



Seymour Singh (Mr)
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