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15 May 2018

Press Release

www.consumersfiji.org

Council concerned with price gouging under Homes – Care Initiative

The Consumer Council of Fiji is deeply concerned that traders are engaged in price gouging to take advantage of Fijians receiving assistance under the Government's Homes- CARE initiative.

The Homes- CARE initiative was rolled out by Government to aid Fijians who lost household items or whose homes were damaged or destroyed in TC Josie and TC Keni earlier this year.

Fijians who qualified for this assistance received cards loaded with up to \$7,000 to purchase materials to repair their homes and replace possessions that were lost or badly damaged from assigned traders working with the initiative.

But the council is aware of cases where traders increased the price of goods after the initiative was rolled out, to make money off the misery of Fijians.

The Council received 3 complaints on its Consumer Helpline number 155 from the western division.

One disappointed complainant found a Homes-CARE initiative trader selling a 32inch television screen for \$712 while the same product was available for \$499 with a non Homes- CARE initiative trader.

In another case, a complainant from the Western Division found a trader trying to take advantage of the Homes- CARE payout, by increasing the price of a bicycle from \$329 to \$549.

These unscrupulous traders are not only profiting from the suffering of Fijians, they are also defrauding the Government of funds set aside to assist victims of natural disasters. The Council advises traders that the practice is not only considered exploitative but unethical and illegal.

The Council is currently conducting price survey and it will name traders involved in price gouging.

The Council encourages consumers to call on its toll free number 155 to lodge or to alert the Council on Homes-CARE initiative traders for increasing the price of goods.

The Homes-CARE initiative vendors are G S Industrial Supplies; Autocare (Fiji) Limited; Kasabias Limited; Home and Living – Vinod Patel; Subrails Company; Lonta Manufacturers Limited; Rups Investment Limited “Big Bear”; Vinod Patel – Complete Home & Building; R B Patel Group Limited; Visions Investment Limited; Haroons Hardware; Rakiraki Hardware Limited; New World; Carpenters Hardware; Homemaker and R C Manubhai.