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May 21, 2018

PRESS RELEASE

Council survey uncovers further price gouging by HOMES-CARE Vendors

A Consumer Council of Fiji regional survey has uncovered more cases of price gouging by HOMES-CARE assistance vendors.

The survey was conducted to gauge the impact of the HOMES-CARE Initiative on Prices of White Goods and the results paint a poor picture of some vendors working under the HOMES-CARE initiative.

During the survey, prices of 28 household items- including televisions, rice cookers, washing machines and chest freezers- were recorded and their price fluctuations noted.

Of the 28 household items surveyed, only 11 were selling at the same prices they were advertised on previously.

Many items which were previously advertised on special or discounted prices were now being sold again at normal prices.

At Courts Homecentres several goods that were previously advertised for lower special prices have now returned to their normal prices

A Kambrook 8Cup Rice Express Cooker was advertised on Special for **\$109 from \$129.** **But at the time of the survey it had increased again to \$129.**

A Hisense 36litre Microwave was advertised in December for \$349 but when the price was checked in the survey it had increased to \$399.

In the Northern Division, **the same trader had a Hisense 157litre Single Door Fridge promoted for a special at \$529 on 21st April 2018. But at the time of the survey it had returned to the normal price of \$629.**

A Simmons 200litre Chest Freezer previously advertised at **a special price of \$859 was found to be sold instore for an increased price of \$899** by the same vendor.

But the North and Western Division were not the only areas where prices of these goods were increased.

This suggests that HOMES-CARE traders are attempting to cover all bases and take advantage of those who may seek to purchase their goods outside of the divisions affected.

Home and Living in the Central Division had a Simmons 200litre Chest Freezer previously advertised at a special price of \$859 however this was sold instore for an increased price of \$899.

Also in the Central Division MH Homemaker had advertised a Philips 10Cup Rice Cooker on it's website for a special price of \$109. The current instore price was \$119.

Courts in the Central Division had a Hisense 12kg Twin Tub Washing Machine advertised on a special price of \$629 on 15th April 2018. At the time of the survey the price had returned to it's normal price of \$709.

The same vendor had a Hisense 5kg Twin Tub Washing Machine advertised on a special price of \$329 on 15th April 2018 but the price had returned to \$375 when this survey was conducted.

There was also a Hisense 32" Smart HD LED TV previously advertised at a special price of \$599 from a price of \$699 but had it's price increased to \$749.

It seems traders are taking advantage of the huge demand by a large number of households that have money loaded cards buying under Governments home care initiative.

And what is more disconcerting is that prices were offered at discounted prices during festive seasons, but the same special offers were not extended to people at a critical times when they are trying to rebuild their lives after suffering from a couple of natural disasters.

Some items that were on special by as late as April had returned to normal prices in early May when the Government started to select traders and rolled out the Home Care Initiative.

Unscrupulous traders under the HOMES-CARE initiative need to realise that they also have a social responsibility to fulfil.

The assistance that Government has given will help rebuild the lives of those affected and HOMES-CARE traders should see this as an opportunity to fulfil their social responsibility.

The Consumer Council of Fiji also acknowledges that there are HOMES-CARE vendors who are assisting consumers in getting maximum value for money.

Subrails Furniture and Vinod Patel Home and Living were two HOMES-CARE vendors who either maintained their prices or dropped them further and should serve as an example for other HOMES-CARE vendors.

The Consumer Council of Fiji encourages consumers to call our toll-free National Consumer Helpline on 155 should they require assistance.

APPENDIX

1. Western

		Instore	Ad	Comments
	<u>Courts</u>			
Kambrook	8Cup Express Rice Cooker	129	109	
	5Cup Master Rice Cooker	89	99	Advertisement was for April 2018 'Specials' reduced from 99
Hisense	36L Microwave	399	349	Advertisement did not mention any 'Specials'
	<u>Subrails</u>			

Sheffield	1.5litre Rice Cooker	69	69	
	Slow Cooker	189	189	
	Tower Fan	99	99	
	30cm Desk Fan	59	45	Ad was for Specials valid until 30/03/18 reduced from normal 59
	1.7litre Stainless Steel Cordless Kettle	75	75	
Alpine	5PC Dining Set	649	699	Price reduced from advertised
	Home & Living			
Samsung	5.5kg Top Load Washing Machine	999	999	Ad was a special price reduced from 1399
	J2 Pro Smart Phone	499	499	
	J5 Pro Smart Phone	599	599	
	J7 Pro Smart Phone	799	799	
Alpha	4 Burner Cooktop Glasstop Cooker	369	459	Current instore price reduced further from ad price

2. Northern

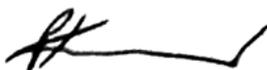
		Instore	Ad	Comments
	Courts			
Hisense	157litre Single Door Fridge	629	Customer Receipt 21/04/18 529	Special Prices offered in April was 529, and customers were even offered more reduction until \$495 - Prices returned to normal (\$629) in 2 weeks
DECORA	1.6 x 2.3m RUG -	237	Customer Receipt 21/04/18 205	Special Prices offered in April was \$205, and customers were offered further reductions to as low as \$189 - Prices returned to normal (\$237) in 2 weeks
STEVE	Bunk Bed	419	Customer Receipt 21/04/18 379	Special Prices were obtained from a customer's receipt in April - Prices returned to normal in 2 weeks

3. Central

		Instore	Ad	Comments
	Courts			
Kambrook	1.7 Litre Profile Kettle	139	FS 11/01/18 109	Ad was a special price reduced price of 139
Singer	1.7Litre Plastic Kettle	55	FS 13/01/18 55	
	1.7 L Stainless Kettle	99	FT 16/04/18 99	
Hiesense	12kg Twin Tub Washing Machine	709	FB Ad 15/04/18 629	Ad was a special price reduced price of 709

	9kg Twin Tub Washing Machine	615	FS 06/01/18 539	Ad was a special price reduced price of 615
	7kg Twin Tub Washing Machine	519	FS 06/01/18 409	Ad was a special price reduced price of 519
	5kg Twin Tub Washing Machine	375	FB Ad 15/04/18 329	Ad was a special price reduced price of 375
Hisense	32" Smart HD LED TV Set	749	FS 19/01/18 599	
	<u>Home & Living</u>			
Simmons	200litre Chest Freezer	899	FB 12/12/17 859	Ad was a special price reduced from
Pensonic	Single Burner Gas Stove	39	FT 08/03/18 39	
	<u>MH Homemaker</u>			
Philips	10Cup Rice Cooker	119	MH Online Store Webpage 109	Ad is currently on the webpage

Fiji



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Ms. Premila Kumar
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Consumer Council of Fiji