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## PRESS RELEASE

### Consumers under Homes CARE should not be Discriminated

The Consumer Council of Fiji is alarmed that some vendors under the HOMES-CARE assistance scheme continue to hike their prices to take advantage of the victims of National Disaster.

Recipients of HOMES-CARE assistance are being robbed of a chance to replace more household items because some unscrupulous vendors continue to use tactics to either push their old stock, hike prices, use promotions to entice consumers to spend all their money in their store or use discriminatory practice.

The Consumer Council of Fiji has found that Courts Labasa store made a list of goods that could be bought at discounted prices by recipients of the assistance.

While the Council takes no issue with this, it is perplexing to note that the items on sale in the store could not be purchased at the sale price by Fijians on Homes- Care assistance. This is due to the fact that the discounted products are not on the HOMES-CARE List.

Consumers instead are forced to pay the normal price for the goods on sale while other customers are able to reap the benefits of the sale price.

Courts is the largest HOMES-CARE vendor in Labasa. Majority of Northern customers purchase their household items from Courts. Hence the unfair and irrational practice is totally unacceptable.

The Consumer Council of Fiji questions as to why there is discrepancy in the manner in which household items are sold to different consumers.

Fijians on HOMES-CARE assistance have already suffered the loss and damage of property. They should at the very least have the opportunity to purchase all goods at their sale price.

Instead they are faced with unscrupulous traders, fleecing them out of money meant to restore their lost possessions.

It is disconcerting that goods were offered at discounted prices during festive seasons and other celebrations. However, the same special offers were not extended to people at critical times when they are trying to rebuild their lives after suffering through natural disasters.

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

The Consumer Council of Fiji advises consumers to be vigilant when using their HOMES-CARE initiative funds and carefully evaluate where they make purchases from.

Consumers are urged to call the Council's toll-free helpline on 155 to report unscrupulous traders taking advantage of Fijians under the HOMES-CARE initiative.



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