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PRESS RELEASE

Refrain from Price Gouging during Natural Disaster periods

The Consumer Council of Fiji is advising traders that increasing prices during natural disasters amounts to unfair trade practices particularly under Section 66 and 76 of the Commerce Commission Act 2010.

This advice comes as consumers are expected to begin preparations for Tropical Cyclone Mona.

Consumers will generally use this time before a cyclone to stock up on essential items in preparation for adverse weather conditions and traders must not take advantage of this rush.

The Council has noted in the past that some unscrupulous traders will seek to increase prices of essential goods at this time and warns traders to refrain from this unethical behaviour

Indeed many consumers will note the traders who give fair or even discounted prices on essential items during a natural disaster and this will secure return businesses.

Essential items will include batteries, candles, torches, bottled water, hurricane lanterns and lamps, chargers and lights, ropes, building material, generators, tarpaulins, tents, carpentry and electrical tools and matches.

These items must be sold for the prices they are worth during times of natural disaster and demand must not be used as an excuse to artificially inflate their prices.

The Council has proposed previously that essential items in natural disasters be placed under short term price control. This period of price control can begin in the days prior to a natural disasters and in the period directly after.

This will ensure that price gouging does not take place and that all consumers are able to access these essential goods at a fair price.

Consumers who come across instances of price-gouging are urged to contact the Consumer Council on the toll- free National Consumer Helpline number 155.

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