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Consumer Council of Fiji



www.consumersfiji.org

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PRESS RELEASE

\$2.1 million back into Consumers' Pockets

A surge in the number of complaints received by the Consumer Council of Fiji has been noted in the first two quarters of the financial year 2019-2020 (August 2019 to January 2020). A total of 1868 complaints worth \$2.8 million were registered and investigated. That is an average of 311 complaints per month.

The Council, through effective mediation, managed to resolve 1592 complaints, which resulted in putting \$2.1 million back into consumers' pockets. Every year consumers lose millions of dollars through unfair trading practices.

This also reflects an increase in complaint numbers when compared to the same period in the last financial year 2018-2019. The Council attributes the increase in complaints to its comprehensive nationwide consumer education and awareness campaign.

Food & Drinks topped the list with a total of 203 complaints; noting an increase by around 34 percent when compared with the same period last year. The nature of complaints ranged from traders selling expired, rotten, poor quality and contaminated food to traders selling regulated food items beyond regulated prices.

Landlord & Tenancy related complaints ranked the second on our list with a total of 202 complaints in this period. Issues brought to the Council's attention under this category included landlords not issuing rental receipts to tenants despite several requests, landlords not giving a month's written notice to vacate, refusal by landlords in refunding rental bond, some landlords gave unjustified quotations for wear and tear of their rented premises, illegal increase in rent despite the residential rent freeze order in place and poor housing conditions. Some landlords even disconnected electricity and water supply to their tenants' flats. Dealing with such unscrupulous landlords is not easy but the Council makes an effort to contact them to amicably resolve complaints.

Arriving at third place were complaints relating to Electronic Goods (home) with a total of 130 complaints. There was also an increase noted in this category from 109 complaints for the same period last year. The nature of complaints ranged from electrical home items becoming faulty within a short period of purchase or within the warranty period; items facing same issues despite repairs being conducted and items being misplaced whilst being tendered for repairs.



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The disadvantage of buying electronic goods is when consumers take it for repairs, they are informed that there is no back up services or spare parts available.

Several receipts related complaints were received, totalling 115 complaints. The nature of complaints in this category included either non-issuance of receipt or the issuance of illegible receipts. Consumers are encouraged to demand for receipt and keep them safely. Traders often come up with the excuse that the consumers do not demand for receipt thus, they do not issue them. Consumers should be aware that receipts are important evidence for their purchase when seeking redress for defective goods.

A total of 88 complaints were received on Misleading Advertisements and Promotions. The Council regularly monitors advertisements and product and service promotions that appear in the media, online and through other mediums. The ploy to entice consumers to purchase products and services often result in advertisement containing inaccurate or misleading information. One common problem is that all information that a consumer needs is not contained in an advertisement, or certain terms and conditions are stated in very fine prints.

Other complaints registered relates to mobile product, Water Authority of Fiji, Hardware, Public transport and Non-Food items were received.

The Council has established its presence in the market by engaging on issues of concern to consumers. We voice consumer issues which are complaint-driven whereby we engage traders, consumers and other enforcement agencies to create a fair and just market practices for consumers.

We try to achieve better deals for everyday consumers by highlighting fundamental issues that affect them on a daily basis. The Council is encouraging consumers to come forward to lodge their complaints. Consumer solidarity is needed and therefore, consumers can keep the Council and the rest of the consumers informed on any unethical business practices in the marketplace.

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Mrs Seema Shandil
Chief Executive Officer
Consumer Council of Fiji