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PRESS RELEASE

Banks Have a Fiduciary Responsibility Towards their Customers

The Consumer Council of Fiji (CCoF) is reminding banks of their fiduciary responsibility to effectively communicate with customers pertaining to any changes in terms and conditions, clauses in contracts and any changes/restrictions to the respective customers' accounts or services.

CCoF Chief Executive Officer, Ms. Seema Shandil says this reminder is being issued after the Council received a few alarming cases whereby certain banks took dire steps such as unconditionally blocking customers' accounts and even removing clauses from loans contract after it was signed by the customer.

In one of the cases, a bank blocked the customer's account without any notification. The customer only became aware of this when unable to access funds and withdraw the salary.

"Due to this arbitrary action by the bank in question, the customer was not able to shop and also had to make several calls and run-arounds to regain access to her account. Whatever the justification, the bank had the responsibility to inform the customer why the account had to be placed on hold and provided alternative means to access the account. They cannot just leave customers high and dry on a whim," added Ms Shandil.

In a separate case, a customer thoroughly read and signed a loan agreement. However, a few weeks after signing, the bank in question returned to the customer with another loan agreement stating that there was a minor change in the 'subject line' of the agreement; which required re-signing. A few weeks later, the customer realized that the bank was making unexpected deductions; which was waived as per the initial agreement. To the customer's dismay, upon reading the agreement again, it was discovered that the clause was removed from the second contract without any notification.

"These arbitrary actions are highly unethical and turns consumers' day into a nightmare. Therefore, these practices must not be repeated by any institution; especially by organizations such as banks given customers place their trust in them," stated Ms Shandil.

Being in the service industry, it is mandatory that banks provide a good standard of customer service/support services and must pay due regard to the interests of its customers and treat them fairly.

Consumers who face similar issues with their banks are urged to contact the Council on the toll-free number 155 or lodge a complaint using the Consumer Council of Fiji mobile app.



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www.consumersfiji.org



Mobile App

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Ms Seema Shandil

Chief Executive Officer