



2023 World Consumer Rights Day Celebration

Message from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Co-operatives, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Communications

Honourable Manoa Kamikamica



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Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Co-operatives,
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Bula Vinaka!

Every year Consumer movements unite across the globe to mark 15th March as “World Consumer Rights Day” (WCRD) raising global awareness on the rights and needs of consumers. Celebrating the day is a chance to demand that the rights of all consumers are respected and protected, and to protest against market abuses and social injustices which undermine those rights.

This year’s theme, “Empowering Consumers Through Clean Energy Transitions” brings to the forefront Fiji’s vision of creating a world where we emancipate the survival of our planet.

World leaders at COP27 in Egypt focused on securing a just transition in the energy sector – making a difference to consumers, and this year’s theme amplifies this vision.

This is timely and relevant amidst the greatest cost-of-living crisis as the energy World drastically responds to supply and climate issues where consumers equally and powerfully have a core role to play in delivering a just transition.

As most economies face a deepening energy crisis globally, a domino effect has been squarely felt on **supply chains, food and finance prices** impacting vulnerable consumers. Global energy prices soared by almost 50 percent at the culmination of 2022 and will stay high this year.

EMPOWERING ACTIVE PARTICIPATION FOR ALL

Consumers everywhere, including Fiji are radically changing their lifestyle to access essential basic needs. Therefore, it is vital to ensure people’s basic needs for energy services are met equitably. Decent jobs and worker protection, promoting inclusive social and economic development should be placed at the heart of energy transitions. Indeed, various measures must be taken to promote this theme and raise awareness about the importance of clean energy for consumer empowerment.

So what role do consumers play – the largest group of economic stakeholders – in energy transition?

The Private sector plays an active role in securing a clean energy economy, whether it is businesses or consumer perspective. Consumers must be included in clean energy transitions to ensure sustainability – as marketplace actors, consumers have the potential to take action that accelerates clean energy transitions.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that demand-side changes could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 70 percent by 2050 – and for that reason, Fiji needs to develop awareness and understanding on this issue to become ‘eco-conscious’ consumers.

Simply meaning, we as consumers have power to make a substantial and important difference by collectively changing how we travel, cook, heat, cool and power our homes to inculcate a transition towards **cleaner energy**.

In addition to this, consumers have the power to trigger transformative changes by practicing **behavioral change**. Adopting **simple practical solutions** such as, taking public transport, carpooling

and using electricity efficiently are low-carbon alternatives and a step towards transitioning to **cleaner energy**.

As a consumer, you also have the power to purchase products and services that are more efficiently produced, which in turn have lower embodied emissions.

The opportunities for people and the planet are clear, but consumers have to see through the often expensive decisions which present new opportunities for more proactive engagement in energy services.

For the Fiji Government, we are committed to protecting consumer rights and promoting fair and transparent practices in the marketplace. We have taken steps to strengthen consumer protection laws, increase public awareness of consumer rights, and provide accessible and effective mechanisms for redress.

So how do we make clean energy more affordable and accessible? How do we unlock cheaper access to finance for clean energy?

The Fiji Government will work on the appropriate mechanisms through the national, regional and international commitments that will establish consumer trust, enhance access to cleaner energy and greener products, develop regulatory framework conducive to clean energy transition and foster multinational collaboration.

Such initiatives and collaboration with organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme’s Blue Economy Initiative. The Blue Economy encompasses sustainable sectors such as shipping/transportation, and most importantly, renewable energy – a transition to clean energy, which can be a potential new source of income and employment, diversify the economy, and support sustainable development. By developing its Blue Economy, Fiji is developing a Clean Economy for our future generation.

Our work does not end at such collaborations, and The Fiji Government will continue to take a lead role on the international arena by demanding that the large polluters take action towards cleaner and greener energy options.

Together, let’s create a cleaner, greener planet. Happy World Consumer Rights Day! Vinaka.

Message from the Chief Executive Officer of Consumer Council of Fiji Ms Seema Shandil

Bula Vinaka!

March 15 is perhaps one of the most important dates in the Consumer Council of Fiji’s calendar; a day which celebrates and champions the rights of consumers in Fiji and globally – the World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD). Celebrating the day is a chance to demand that the rights of all consumers are respected and protected and to protest against market abuses and social injustices which undermine those rights.

The Council has been spearheading the national WCRD celebrations for 4 decades; as the voice of consumers and the custodians of consumer rights in Fiji. Over these years, the Council has advocated for the rights and interests of consumers, lobbied for policy changes and launched awareness campaigns on critical consumer issues.

This year, the theme for WCRD is ‘Empowering Consumers through Clean Energy Transitions’. To preserve a livable climate, greenhouse-gas emissions must be reduced by half by 2030 and to net zero by 2050. Bold, fast, and wide-ranging action needs to be taken by governments and businesses. The transition to a low-carbon world also requires the participation of consumers. For this reason, the Council is not only raising awareness on clean energy, but is also initiating productive discussions with policy makers and industry players to promote clean energy.

The opportunity for consumers to accelerate clean energy transitions is currently being missed. Consumers need to be supported and empowered to overcome consistent technological, infrastructural, financial, regulatory and knowledge related barriers, which stand in the way of transformative action. These are essential to delivering change at the pace and scale required to avoid catastrophic climate change. What is the role of consumers – the largest group of economic stakeholders – in these changes? How can they be protected and empowered in clean energy transitions?

Consumers are the actors for change. People are not passive bystanders to be included in clean energy transitions. We all wield power as marketplace actors. We are all consumers of energy services, and as such, we have the potential to take action that accelerates clean energy transitions.

Research has shown that demand-side changes could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 70% by 2050. In practice, this means consumers everywhere are making changes to how they travel, cook and heat, cool and power their homes. People can trigger transformative changes by adopting low-carbon alternatives – like carpooling or using public transport instead of a private vehicle – and improving other existing such as heavy reliance of fossil fuel.

The opportunities for people and planet are clear. Whilst the Council will continue to work with industry stakeholders to address issues relating to availability, affordability and accessibility to clean energy



Chief Executive Officer of Consumer Council of Fiji
Ms Seema Shandil

and corresponding products; the Council is calling on consumers to begin this transition at household level. Remember, even the simplest of actions can go a long way in clean energy transition.

Consumers could be the missing catalyst for change.