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Consumer Council of Fiji



www.consumersfiji.org



Mobile App

29 March 2023

PRESS RELEASE

Consumers Lose Thousands to Shoddy Construction/Joinery Companies - Council

Unwarranted delays, poor service delivery, giving customers a run around, accepting payments and disappearing without completing works is becoming a common occurrence amongst construction/joinery companies. It has also been discovered that certain traders/individuals are advertising their services through online platforms and taking thousands of dollars as deposits with no intention to carry out the agreed work.

The Consumer Council of Fiji (CCoF) has registered over 130 complaints in relation to the foregoing. The rapid increase of similar complaints in the last 3 years showcases that this is unfortunately a growing issue faced by hundreds of consumers. In one such case, a consumer paid a hefty deposit of \$130,000 to a contractor in January 2021 with an understanding that the works will be completed in November of the same year, however, till date the work is still far from complete. As a result, the consumer has been forced to rent at an alternative residence where she continues to incur additional rental expenses as her “Dream Home” is still not ready.

“A pressing concern reflected in these complaints relates to a total disregard of ‘commitment and professionalism’ among some construction companies and individual tradesmen. They do not value ‘time’ and the ‘work schedule’ the two parties agreed upon. A number of them do not keep their word and they fail to honor their obligations as a service provider by not meeting the deadline for the completion of the work,” said CCoF CEO, Ms. Seema Shandil.

“It is very simple - respective traders and individual tradesmen must only provide assurance to consumers if they are 100% certain that they will be able to complete the work within the mutually agreed upon time and up to the required standards. False assurances must not be provided to consumers as it clearly implies the intention to rip-off unsuspecting consumers,” added Ms. Shandil.

The Council is also calling on consumers to be extra cautious and must not contact the first individual/trader they come across for construction work; proper due diligence must be conducted just like with any other purchase.

“Those consumers planning to hire the services of the construction companies or individual tradespersons must ensure there is a written agreement detailing the scope of work and the cost,” Ms Shandil further stressed.



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Consumers facing similar issues are encouraged to reach out to the Council via the toll-free line 155 or using the Consumer Council of Fiji’s mobile app. Alternatively, consumers can also lodge complaints using the Consumer Council of Fiji mobile app.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shandil".

Seema Shandil

Chief Executive Officer