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PRESS RELEASE

Council Issues Alert Against Unscrupulous Construction Companies and Second-Hand Spare Parts Dealers

A strong alert is being issued to consumers regarding certain dodgy construction companies and second-hand spare parts dealers. The Consumer Council of Fiji has observed a significant surge in cases related to these sectors, and consumers are urged to exercise caution to protect themselves from potential scams and substandard services.

Complaints pertaining to construction companies has been a major concern for a few years now with 231 complaints registered since 2021 with a monetary value of almost \$3 million -10 cases were recorded in the last month alone. In one case, a consumer had paid \$54,000 for renovation, however, works were incomplete and not up to standard. The Council's investigations revealed that whilst an agreement was in place, proper scope of works was not captured by the parties giving rise to disputes.

“Construction companies have been under the Council's radar for their lack of adherence to safety regulations, poor workmanship, and instances of unfinished projects after receiving payments. Some consumers have reported investing substantial sums only to be left with shoddy work and no recourse. The Council emphasizes that consumers should thoroughly research and verify the credentials of construction companies, ask for references and read reviews before engaging their services,” said CCoF CEO Ms Seema Shandil.

On the other hand, the Council is addressing another pressing issue that has gained momentum in recent times—second-hand motor vehicle spare parts. As concerns escalate due to the limited warranty terms often associated with these parts, the Council has recorded 261 since 2021 and a notably 7 complaints in this category during the month of August alone.

“Second-hand spare parts dealers, another area of concern, have been accused of selling counterfeit or substandard products that can endanger the safety of vehicles. Ineffective brakes, faulty electrical components, and unreliable engine parts can have catastrophic consequences. The Council urges consumers to be cautious when purchasing second-hand spare parts and recommends opting for authorized dealers or trusted sources” said Ms Shandil.

Cases regarding short warranty periods being provided on spare parts have also been brought to the Council's attention. In one instance, a consumer was provided only with a 7-day warranty for secondhand ABS pump costing \$1500. However, the item stopped functioning on the 8th day hence, was not provided any redress.



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Ms Shandil has stressed that consumers should consider spending a few extra dollars and getting quality parts from authorized dealers rather than purchasing parts which stops working in a few days – this actually tends to be more costly in the long run.

The Consumer Council of Fiji has been actively engaging with relevant authorities to address these issues and ensure consumer protection. In addition to raising awareness, the Council is advocating for stricter regulations and monitoring mechanisms within these sectors to safeguard the rights and interests of consumers.

As the call for action resounds, Fijian consumers are urged to remain vigilant against these predatory businesses and to report any suspicious activity to the Consumer Council of Fiji via the toll-free number 155 or emailing complaints@consumersfiji.org.

Ms Seema Shandil

Chief Executive Officer