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PRESS RELEASE

**Exploitative Businesses Continue to Dupe Consumers and Evade Accountability,  
Costing \$750,000 in Damages**

*Shocking Revelations: Over 600 Complaints Unearth Deceptive Tactics of Certain Registered Businesses*

A web of deceit spun by a mere 10 registered businesses is tarnishing their sectors and leaving consumers devastated. Despite their official status, these businesses have proven that being registered doesn't necessarily guarantee ethical conduct, reliability, or adherence to consumer protection laws in Fiji.

These startling statistics paint a grim picture: a staggering 570 complaints have been registered since 2022, exposing a trail of shattered trust and a monetary toll of a whopping \$750,000. This hard-earned money has been systematically siphoned out of the hands of unsuspecting consumers, a dire consequence of these businesses' dubious tactics. Whilst the Council has received well over 10,000 complaints since 2022 against over 100 businesses, these 10 businesses are in the spotlight as they present the mere fact that certain registered businesses are only in the business of 'profiteering' and 'conning' consumers out of the cash – their registered status is just a façade which furthers with dubious course.

Operating within critical sectors such as construction, finance, clothing, and electronics, these unscrupulous entities have preyed on consumers by peddling subpar goods and services, or worse, not supplying goods after pocketing their victims' funds. The implications for the victims extend beyond financial loss; they're left emotionally scarred by the very businesses they once trusted.

Shockingly, despite the mounting evidence of their wrongdoings, most of these rogue businesses remain operational, shamelessly continuing their operations as if untouched by the growing wave of consumer grievances. It's a stark reminder that justice has not yet caught up with these dubious traders – many of whom the Council has named previously.

“The scale of these exploitations is nothing short of heinous,” remarked Seema Shandil, the CEO of the Consumer Council of Fiji. “For far too long, these businesses have exploited Fijian consumers with their deceitful practices. They've capitalised on systemic gaps in our legislation, artfully dodging accountability and leaving a trail of economic and emotional devastation in their wake.”

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Ms. Shandil continued, “It’s high time to fill these regulatory voids and hold these businesses accountable for their actions. The Consumer Council of Fiji has tirelessly advocated for consumer justice, making numerous referrals to relevant enforcement bodies. Yet, these referrals alone can’t close the chasm of deceit these businesses have exploited – we need to take action now.”

Businesses have adeptly exploited legal loopholes to evade consequences. While they seize financial advantage through deception, they ingeniously navigate legal grey areas to evade the law’s grasp. One of their tactics involves registering as businesses, effectively constructing a barrier that impedes law enforcement from pursuing charges under certain laws. Furthermore, these cunning entities provide subpar goods and services, strategically eliminating the element of ‘deception’ and complicating legal action, all while extorting money from unsuspecting consumers.

In a resolute response, the Consumer Council of Fiji is poised to take proactive measures. In the coming weeks, the Council will initiate discussions with pertinent stakeholders, in order to conduct a comprehensive mapping exercise. This endeavor will pinpoint the critical gaps that currently undermine consumer protection laws, effectively providing these unscrupulous businesses with an avenue to exploit. Armed with the insights from this exercise, the Consumer Council will fervently lobby for crucial policy changes that will act as a deterrent and a formidable barrier against the scrupulous activities that have plagued consumers for far too long.

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](mailto:complaints@consumersfiji.org)



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