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Consumer Council of Fiji



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PRESS RELEASE

Escalating Fraudulent Impersonation Schemes

The Consumer Council of Fiji is issuing an urgent warning to the public regarding the alarming rise in fraudulent individuals who are impersonating others to execute financial scams using Vodafone's M-PAiSA platform. The Council has uncovered multiple instances where innocent consumers have been targeted and exploited by these deceitful individuals.

One particularly concerning case involves an imposter impersonating Mr. Kamal Chetty, the CEO of Investment Fiji. This fraudulent individual has been using Mr. Chetty's identity, including his photo, to perpetrate a scam that falsely promises lucrative investment returns. The Council was alerted to this fraudulent activity by a consumer who was approached with an investment offer. The offer included an investment of \$500 via M-PAiSA, with the promise of a quick return of \$1000 within 48 hours. However, after the lapse of 48 hours, the consumer did not receive the money, and was even asked to pay a \$1000 withdrawal fee to claim her money. Additionally, the Council has obtained screenshots of a Viber group where multiple individuals are involved, encouraging others to participate in this fraudulent investment scheme, indicating the involvement of several perpetrators.

In another distressing case, the Council uncovered a scammer who impersonates hotel General Managers across Fiji to extort money from unsuspecting staff members. The Council was alerted by the manager of an Apartment Hotel in Suva, who reported that their staff fell victim to this scam and paid \$800 to the imposter, believing they were interacting with the hotel General Manager. Investigations by the Council have revealed that this scammer uses different aliases on the Viber app and pretends to be prominent General Managers and CEOs of various hotels and organizations across Fiji, asking for money from staff members.

The Council is urging consumers to exercise extreme caution and discretion when making online payments. "People must verify the identity and authenticity of individuals before engaging in financial transactions. We urge consumers to be cautious and undertake thorough due diligence before making any payments. Please remain vigilant and cautious to safeguard your hard-earned money from these fraudulent impersonation schemes," says Council CEO Seema Shandil.

For more information or to report fraudulent activities, consumers can reach out to the Consumer Council of Fiji through the national consumer helpline 155 or email complaints@consumersfiji.org.

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