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Consumer Council of Fiji



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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Top 10 Consumer Complaints Revealed**

As the 2023-2024 financial year comes to a close, a new report sheds light on the top 10 most pressing consumer issues in Fiji. This overview offers insights into the challenges faced by consumers, from the surge in financial scams and fraud to persistent concerns about food safety and landlord-tenant disputes. The report underscores the urgent need for enhanced consumer protection and effective resolution strategies to address these critical issues.

Financial scams and fraud have topped the list of complaints for the second year in a row, accounting for 958 registered cases (29% of the total complaints). This underscores the increasing concern over fraudulent activities in Fiji.

Complaints related to food and beverages were the second most common issue, with 508 cases reported, encompassing problems such as expired products, spoiled food, and poor hygiene in restaurants.

Disputes between landlords and tenants continue to be a prevalent issue, with 467 complaints filed. Tenants across Fiji face challenges such as landlords refusing to refund bonds, illegal disconnection of utilities, unlawful eviction notices, rent increases despite the ongoing rent freeze, the absence of tenancy agreements, and failure to provide rent receipts.

Council CEO Seema Shandil emphasized that these top three categories of complaints highlight critical areas of consumer concern. “While there is substantial work being done to address fraud and scams, the high number of complaints highlights the need for the public to remain vigilant and make informed decisions when dealing with others regarding money,” said Shandil.

She added, “The Council is actively collaborating with the Ministry of Health and the National Food Safety Taskforce to effectively address food safety concerns and ensure higher standards

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for consumers. At the same time, the Council remains deeply concerned about the persistent challenges in resolving landlord-tenant disputes, particularly due to the absence of comprehensive legislation to protect both parties. Despite these challenges, the Council is fully committed to finding amicable and fair solutions that safeguard the rights and interests of all stakeholders involved.”

As e-commerce continues to grow, the Council noted 239 complaints linked to online shopping. These touch on matters of delivery, product quality, and fraudulent activities - underlining the importance of building trust in online transactions. Public transport issues garnered 222 complaints, revealing the pressing need for public transport operators to adhere to service schedules, charging correct fares and providing quality customer service.

Similarly, 195 complaints were received concerning faulty household electronic goods while 165 complaints were lodged on the issue of electronic and computer services. Additionally, the issue of VAT/receipts/stamp duties led to 146 complaints being lodged with the Council.

Misleading advertisements and promotions resulted in 142 complaints, while hardware issues accounted for 127 complaints, both emerging as key areas of consumer dissatisfaction.

The Council will continue its on-the-ground monitoring and surveillance efforts, alongside its ongoing advocacy work to address these key issues. Additionally, it will engage in strategic action by collaborating with the government and other agencies to advocate for change in these critical areas.

“As part of our mandate to safeguard consumer rights, we will use every available resource to ensure consumers are fully protected,” Shandil emphasizes. “At the same time, it is crucial that we are made aware of these issues, and we urge consumers to come forward and lodge their complaints rather than remain silent. This will enable us to monitor the market more effectively

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and take appropriate action. Even in cases where we are unable to act directly, we will advocate for policy changes to address these concerns,” adds Shandil.

Consumers are encouraged to contact the Council’s national toll-free line at 155 or email [complaints@consumersfiji.org](mailto:complaints@consumersfiji.org) to lodge their complaints.

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