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Consumer Council of Fiji



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PRESS RELEASE

Council Warns of Visa Consultant Scams Amidst Growing Demand for Overseas Opportunities

With an increasing number of Fijians seeking overseas opportunities, the Consumer Council of Fiji is urging the public to exercise caution when dealing with visa consultants, as fraudulent operators continue to exploit the high demand for migration services. Despite previous warnings from the Council, many consumers are still falling prey to visa-related scams, often handing over significant amounts of money without properly verifying the credentials of these consultants. This has allowed scammers to thrive in the market, as people are not performing the necessary checks or demanding evidence of legitimacy before parting with their funds.

A recent case reported to the Council involved a group of caregiving students targeted by an individual posing as a visa consultant on social media. Promising overseas job opportunities, the individual convinced the students to transfer funds, but suspicions grew as additional payments were demanded. A preliminary investigation revealed that multiple students from the same institution had collectively paid hundreds of dollars, without ever meeting or speaking to the individual directly—all communication occurred solely via social media.

"The ease with which these fraudsters operate is alarming, and it also points to a lack of vigilance among consumers," stated Consumer Council CEO Seema Shandil. These fraudsters are capitalizing on the eagerness of Fijians to secure overseas employment and migration opportunities, often taking large sums of money in exchange for empty promises."

Ms. Shandil emphasized that consumers should be cautious about sending money to individuals they've only interacted with online, urging them to verify all claims before making any financial commitments. "Legitimate companies seeking to recruit workers from Fiji will not approach you through social media or demand upfront payments," she stressed. "The desire for overseas opportunities has made many Fijians easy targets for scammers who promise quick and easy migration pathways, but in reality, people are losing thousands of dollars."

Consumers must take precautionary measures to protect themselves from visa consultant scams. First, ensure that the visa consultant is registered and recognized by relevant authorities. It's also essential to check reviews, testimonials, and past cases to verify the consultant's legitimacy. Always request a formal contract that clearly outlines the terms and conditions of

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the visa services being offered. Additionally, consumers should remember that no consultant can guarantee visa approvals—promises that seem too good to be true are often a red flag.

The Council encourages anyone who has fallen victim to a visa consultant scam to come forward and lodge a complaint with us on the National Consumer Helpline toll-free number 155, or email complaints@consumersfiji.org to lodge a query.

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