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Consumer Council of Fiji



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PRESS RELEASE

Ongoing Racial Discrimination in Tenant Selection Raises Alarms

Recent reports of racial discrimination in Fiji's rental market have heightened the urgency for transparency and fairness among tenants, landlords, and real-estate agents. A troubling incident was brought to the attention of the Consumer Council recently, involving a tenant in Suva who paid \$1,400 to a real estate agent to secure a rental property, only to be rejected by the landlord upon learning of the tenant's racial background.

This incident occurred in Suva, where a prospective tenant engaged a licensed real estate agent to secure a rental property. After completing the property viewing, the tenant paid the required rent and bond. However, just a day before the scheduled move-in, he was informed by the agent that the landlord was refusing to rent to him due to his ethnicity. It is particularly troubling that this communication came through a licensed real estate agent, who is expected to maintain high standards of professionalism and integrity while acting as an intermediary between tenants and landlords.

"This incident underscores the critical need for equality and transparency in Fiji's rental market," stated Council CEO Seema Shandil. The Council reminds all stakeholders that racial discrimination is strictly prohibited under the Constitution of Fiji, which guarantees equity for all, and the Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Act.

"Hearing of such discriminatory practices is deeply concerning. Although landlords have the prerogative to select their tenants, denying housing based on ethnic, religious, or racial backgrounds is not only unethical and unconstitutional but also violates basic human decency principles. Fiji prides itself on its diverse populace, representing various races, cultures, and ethnicities, making such discrimination particularly egregious," adds CEO Shandil.

Such discriminatory actions not only pose a significant inconvenience to individuals but also perpetuate a climate of insecurity among prospective tenants who may already be under financial stress. Affected consumers face not only financial loss and wasted time but also emotional distress from ethnic exclusion.

The Council has formally notified the Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission of Fiji to express its concerns about this serious issue. The Council remains committed to

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vigilantly monitoring and addressing discrimination, supporting victims, and holding perpetrators accountable. This includes making referrals to relevant authorities as necessary.

We urge all consumers to exercise vigilance when seeking to rent/lease property and encourage anyone suspecting discrimination or transparency issues to seek support. Tenants who feel they have been treated unfairly are urged to contact the Consumer Council of Fiji through the Toll-Free National Consumer Helpline 155 or via complaints@consumersfiji.org.

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