

JOB DESCRIPTION – ASSISTANT CONSUMER OFFICER (LABASA)

Position	Assistant Consumer Officer
Organization	Consumer Council of Fiji
Tenure	Three Year (Contract)
Duty Station	Labasa
Reporting to	Regional Coordinator - Labasa

1.0 Primary Purpose

To ensure that the Regional Office functions professionally, efficiently and effectively, and at all times meets and contributes to the Council’s overall objectives. To assist consumers in the Northern Division receive redress through alternative dispute resolution mechanism and provide consumer advisory services relevant to consumer protection laws.

2.0 Organizational Context of Position

The Consumer Council of Fiji (CCF) is a statutory body established under the Consumer Council of Fiji Act 1976 (Cap 235). The Council is expected to play a positive role in achieving a market place where consumers are well informed, confident and protected from unlawful, deceptive, misleading or otherwise, objectionable practices. The prime function of the Council is to drive real change for consumers based on these five themes-

- Delivering consumer knowledge, skills and information to all
- Championing and protecting the interests of all consumers
- Assist consumers in resolving complaints with traders and service providers
- Driving change (policy/procedures/practices) to benefit consumers
- Enabling consumers to make responsible choices

3.0 Council’s Role

The Council’s roles are to:

- Improve consumers’ ability to make informed decisions;
- Solve consumer complaints through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), Advisory services and legal representation;
- Advise the Minister on such matters affecting the interests of the consumers;
- Collect, collate and disseminate information in respect of matters affecting the interests of consumers;
- Support or maintain legal proceedings initiated by consumers, where such support is deemed necessary;
- Make representations to the government or to any other persons or organisations on any issues affecting the interests of consumers;
- Conduct research and investigations into matters affecting consumers;
- Provide debt management and consumer credit advisory services to financially illiterate consumers;
- Conduct market surveillance to establish product prices and compliance with product labelling and safety requirements including misrepresentation

- Work in partnership with local, regional and international organizations to identify and understand emerging consumer issues, conduct research and campaign on issues in solidarity to change local and global practices.

4.0 Responsibilities of the Position

The key accountabilities of the Assistant Consumer Officer (Labasa) are:

4.1 Complaints Handling and Dispute Resolution/National Consumer Helpline Support

- Carry out all consumer advisory and ADR work as assigned by the Regional Coordinator.
- Receive and register complaints based on documentary evidence and in-house complaints assessing criterion.
- Assess complaints based information and evidence provided and then offer appropriate and relevant advice to consumers of all the options available in resolving complaints including referring cases to relevant consumer protection authorities and possible Small Claims Tribunal action if the ADR is unsuccessful.
- Seek clarification and further information via telephone, letters, emails and visits from interested parties and Respondents in order to inform complainant of action taken to resolve complaint.
- Attempt to resolve complaints through ADR processes with traders and service providers for acceptable solutions to both parties.
- If ADR fails, assist consumers in preparation of cases that could be best heard and resolved before the Small Claims Tribunal (SCT).
- Arrange and facilitate, including representation, lodgement and hearing of cases as scheduled by the SCT.
- Provide assistance to the SCT as and when required facilitating case research and presentation.
- Refer cases that come under the jurisdiction of other consumer protection agencies for redress.
- Document complaints outcomes in the Complaints Registry.
- Acknowledge and respond to requests for advice and determine or deliver appropriate courses of action.
- Attend to case referral inwards and outwards and monitor outcome.
- Advise consumers of positive or negative outcome of complaint and providing options preferable to resolve complaint or referring cases to relevant authorities.
- Inform Regional Coordinator on the status of complaint issues by providing case studies and statistics of a particular issues in need of reform, policy change or action taken to stop repeated abuse.
- Ensure conclusion of all closed or resolved complaints/cases and issue closure letters accordingly.
- Identify repeated complaint of a particular type or against a particular trader or service provider.
- Provide Debt Management and Consumer Credit advisory services.
- Carry out complaints received through the Council's National Consumer Helpline as assigned by the Regional Coordinator.
- Draft Press Releases and Consumer Alerts on consumer complaints/issues.
- Any other duties assigned by the Regional Coordinator or Managers from Suva Office.

4.2 Campaigns and Awareness Raising

- Carry out all education, information and awareness work for the Council in the Northern Division.
- Initiate and organize all information production and dissemination, education and awareness program effectively and efficiently.
- Organize and execute campaign activities.
- Write press releases and other related activities as requested by the Regional Coordinator.
- Contribute towards the production of the Newsletter & Annual Reports as directed by the Regional Coordinator/Manager CIM.
- Prepare and assist in the dissemination of information to consumers to reduce consumer complaints.
- Deliver oral presentations to consumers and stakeholders as directed by the Regional Coordinator.
- Provide assistance to students on consumer enquiries as and when required.

4.3 Research and Policy Support

- To conduct regular market surveillance, trader and service visits and necessary follow-ups and produce reports on these market surveillance, trader/service visits in the Northern Division.
- Provide information on what research is already available in a policy area including in cross cutting areas involving economic and social development matters, towards preparation of papers and technical presentations as required.
- Coordinate the day-to-day activities of interns and volunteers attached to the RPA Division.

4.4 Reporting

- Prepare Monthly Reports of the Alternative Dispute and Consumer Advisory Division and submit to the Regional Coordinator.
- Prepare Quarterly Reports and submit to Regional Coordinator.

5.0 Key Selection Criteria

5.1 Qualifications

- A Degree in Law, Communication, Journalism, Business Studies, Social Sciences or Economics, Office Administration or Customer Service.

5.2 Technical Expertise

- At least 2 years of demonstrated experience in mediation, information dissemination, education or awareness work.
- Ability to conduct market surveillance and price surveys.
- A commitment to consumer justice.
- Good knowledge of consumer issues nationally and internationally.
- Good knowledge of consumer legislation and practices.
- Should have excellent analytical and research skills.

5.3 Key Skills and Competencies

- Excellent communication skills (oral and written) and the ability to communicate fluently in English and another vernacular.
- Ability to resolve complaints through ADR processes.

- Ability to assess multiple sides of an issue.
- Ability to make decisions.
- Excellent written and spoken communication skills.
- Strategic thinker, innovative, performance driven and an effective decision maker when dealing with complaints.
- Must have excellent analytical and people skills.
- Excellent negotiation skills.
- Ability to interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds both internal and external.
- Must possess excellent interpersonal skills, self - motivation, and good organizational skills.
- Ability to work in a high volume, high pressure environment.
- Ability to work constructively as an individual and as part of a close-knit team.
- Must be a critical thinker and be able to work independently.
- Ability to multi – task.
- Self - Starter, self - organized and motivated.
- Understanding of Council’s obligations to statutory agencies.
- Demonstrated ability to maintain confidentiality and neutrality in a sensitive environment.
- Demonstrated ability to work under minimum supervision and heed directives.
- Adheres to the CCoF communication standards, formats, procedures and style.
- Places the team's agenda before any personal agenda.
- Keeps abreast of current developments in own area of specialization and brings new ideas to the team.

6.0 Contacts

This position has regular contacts with the following organizations:

- Government Ministries/Department
- Relevant Statutory Organizations
- Fijian Competition & Consumer Commission
- Commercial Organizations
- Bureau of Statistics
- Various Traders and Respondents to complaints
- Consumers
- Other Consumer Protection Agencies

7.0 Challenges and Impact on Organization Results

The challenges facing the position holder include the development of effective communication with the consumers and traders. It also requires building relationships with other organization including media, schools, NGOs, community groups, traders and service providers for consumer redress. The incumbent has to develop and maintain knowledge of monopolies and multinational companies to understand the strategies used which may not be fair to the consumers.

The incumbent is expected to take a positive approach to these challenges and develop creative/innovative approaches to handle them. Lateral and strategic thinking is often required to come up with effective and achievable approaches.

The incumbent needs to be strongly consumer-focused and, frequently needs to prioritize and manage multiple tasks/demands set by circumstances.

Taking a humble approach in understanding the plight of every consumer (whatever their state of mind or socio economic background) and rendering the best service possible.

8.0 Organisation Structure

Immediate supervisor: Regional Coordinator – Labasa

Positions Reporting To You	No of Staff Reporting To Them
None	None