

JOB DESCRIPTION – ASSISTANT CONSUMER OFFICER

Position	Assistant Consumer Officer
Organization	Consumer Council of Fiji
Tenure	Three years (Contract)
Duty Station	Suva
Reporting to	Manager Alternative Dispute Resolution & Consumer Advisory

1.0 Primary Purpose

To assist the Consumer Council of Fiji in providing conciliation services for dispute resolution and carry out other duties assigned by the Manager ADR & Consumer Advisory. Also responsible for the efficient implementation of the Council's ADR & Consumer Advisory programme in the Central and Eastern divisions.

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 (ADR)** are:

4.1 Complaints Handling and Dispute Resolution

- Carry out all consumer advisory and ADR work as assigned by the Manager and CEO.
- 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.
- Enter and update complaints and advisory on the complaints management system.
- 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.
- 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.
- Advice consumers of positive or negative outcome of complaint and providing options preferable to resolve complaint or referring cases to relevant authorities.
- Inform Manager 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.

4.2 Publications and Awareness Raising

- Assist in the publications of the Council by providing appropriate articles, case studies and materials from the ADR Division.
- Assist in the dissemination of information to consumers to reduce consumer complaints.

4.3 Reporting

- Prepare Monthly Reports of the Alternative Dispute and Consumer Advisory Division and submit to the Manager ADR & Consumer Advisory.
- Prepare Quarterly Reports and submit to Manager ADR & Consumer Advisory.
- Any other duties assigned by the Manager or the CEO.

5.0 Key Selection Criteria

5.1 Qualifications

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

5.2 Technical Expertise

- A Degree with 2 years' experience in relevant field or Diploma with 8 years' experience in relevant field.
- Relevant experience in mediation work.
- Good knowledge of consumer legislation and practices.
- Good knowledge of consumer issues nationally and internationally.
- Should have excellent analytical and research skills.
- Sound IT skills.
- Good knowledge and experience in the use of statistical and office software.

5.3 Key Skills and Competencies

- Excellent communication skills (oral and written) and the ability to communicate fluently in English and another vernacular.
- Excellent communication skills.
- A self - starter with excellent customer service attributes.
- Self - organized and motivated.
- Demonstrated ability to analyse and solve complex problems in a resource constrained environment.
- Must possess excellent interpersonal skills, self - motivation, and good organizational skills.
- Ability to work in a high volume, high pressure environment.
- Ability to coordinate & organize work.
- Ability to interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds both internal and external.
- Good ADR and decision making skills.
- Ability to deal with challenging consumers.
- Adheres to the CCoF communication standards, formats, procedures and style.
- Places the team's agenda before any personal agenda.

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 organizations particularly consumer protection agencies, Government ministries, relevant statutory bodies including the media, traders and service providers for advocacy work. The incumbent has to develop and maintain knowledge of existing and emerging business practices and how these impact both positively and negatively on consumers. He or she is expected to understand existing and emerging competition issues and markets particularly in a rapidly technology-dependent society. Other challenges arise from the very tight decision-making deadlines imposed by consumers, media and other stakeholders, and managing Council’s involvement in a range of programs which lands on the Council’s lap unexpectedly. 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: Manager Alternative Dispute Resolution & Consumer Advisory

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