18 April 2025 **Press Release**

Behind the Wheel, Beyond the Rules: Council Flags Driving School Complaints

Not all driving lessons begin behind the wheel—some start with headaches and dashed expectations. The Consumer Council of Fiji is urging aspiring drivers and their families to be extra cautious when enrolling with driving schools, as complaints against certain providers continue to steer consumers off course.

Over the past three years, the Council's Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) division has handled a total of **57** complaints concerning driving schools, with the total monetary value of these cases reaching **$21,430**. "Learning to drive is a rite of passage—but for too many consumers, it's become a frustrating detour," says Council CEO Ms. Seema Shandil. "From vanishing instructors to ghost-written contracts, the road to obtaining a driver's license has turned bumpy."

The Council has noted a pattern in the nature of these complaints, which includes written contracts not being provided to learners, receipts of payments being withheld, and driving schools failing to deliver the agreed number of classes. Other troubling issues involve instructors neglecting to fill out mandatory workbooks and, more concerning, reports of unprofessional and even aggressive conduct by instructors. These are not isolated incidents—they reflect a worrying trend that puts both the consumer and the integrity of driver education at risk.

In several cases, consumers paid hundreds of dollars with no formal agreements to support their claims. This leaves learners with little to no recourse when problems arise. "Some driving schools are literally taking consumers for a ride," warns Ms. Shandil. "It's crucial that learners and parents take the time to ask questions, check school credentials, and ensure that everything is in writing from the beginning."

Head Office
Level 5 Vanua House
Victoria Parade GPO, Suva
Phone: 3300792/3310183
CEO: 3305864
Fax: 3300115
Email: complaints@consumersfiji.org

Lautoka/West
Suite 4 Popular Building
Vidilo Street
P.O. Box 5396, Lautoka
Phone: 6664987
Email: consumerltk@connect.com.fj

Labasa/North
Shop 2, Mudaliar Investment
Sangam Avenue Street
P.O. Box 64, Labasa
Phone: 8812559
Email: colbs@connect.com.fj

The Council is increasing its outreach and monitoring efforts to ensure that fair trading practices are upheld in the driver education industry. While the Council continues to push for better accountability from service providers, it also urges consumers to be vigilant and speak up when something feels off. Complaints can be resolved more effectively when issues are reported early and documented clearly.

Consumers who are experiencing difficulties with driving schools are strongly encouraged to contact the Council for assistance. The Council is committed to protecting consumer rights and ensuring that no one is left in the dark when it comes to fair services and redress. For more information or to lodge a complaint, call us through our National Consumer Helpline - 155. Learning to drive should build confidence, not cause frustration—let's work together to keep our roads and our consumer choices safe.