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Press Release

Calls for Urgent Review of E-Ticketing System Challenges

A revealing snap survey has laid bare the growing frustration and logistical chaos surrounding Fiji's e-ticketing system for public buses, prompting calls for an urgent overhaul. The recent heightened public discourse and increasing concern over the challenges faced by consumers led the Consumer Council of Fiji to conduct a snap survey in Suva, Lautoka, and Labasa. While the sample size was small, comprising 122 participants, it included only regular bus users from three major urban centres, and it reflects a broader pattern, consistent with the complaints the Council continues to receive.

The Council gathered feedback from 122 bus commuters across the three cities. While 52 percent of respondents indicated satisfaction with the e-ticketing services, 48 percent expressed frustration, citing ongoing issues that have remained unaddressed for far too long.

Among the issues highlighted, several key concerns emerged: the first is a glaring lack of top-up locations, especially for those living in semi-urban or rural areas, long queues at top-up locations, unreliable network connectivity, limited access to recharge points after hours (especially in rural areas), and the lack of alternative payment options when the system is down.

The Council is also concerned that the discontinuation of disposable cards has left many consumers without a backup option during emergencies. Some commuters have reported being left behind when bus drivers refused to accept any alternative form of payment during system outages. While the Council recognises that accepting cash is illegal and could result in fines for both drivers and passengers, it raises an important question: what alternatives are commuters supposed to rely on when the system fails?

Furthermore, one of the most persistent issues is the removal of printed receipts, which has left many consumers, particularly the elderly and those without smartphones, unable to verify fare deductions or monitor their remaining balance.

In light of these findings, the Consumer Council is calling for immediate action from Vodafone Fiji and all stakeholders involved in the administration of the e-ticketing system.

"Consumers are struggling with a system that was supposed to make their lives easier," said Seema Shandil, CEO of the Consumer Council of Fiji. "While we fully support the growing digital economy and our collective move towards a cashless society, we cannot ignore the challenges faced by ordinary people in accessing this basic service. When the system fails, it

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: consumerlwk@connect.com.fj

Labasa/North

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



doesn't just inconvenience people, it disrupts livelihoods. This became apparent for everyone to see during the recent nationwide disruption to the e-Transport Bus Card top-up system, where there was no backup plan in place for commuters. are urging Vodafone Fiji to address these issues urgently, transparently, and in consultation with the public."

"The Council is particularly concerned about the disproportionate impact on elderly passengers and rural communities, who face the greatest barriers to access and the least digital support," added Ms. Shandil. "This is not the first-time concerns about e-ticketing have been raised. However, the Consumer Council now considers the situation urgent and unacceptable, and is calling for a national review of the system's effectiveness and fairness."

While the Council understands Vodafone has launched an app and has taken steps to rectify some of the issues, it must communicate these actions more clearly, consider the real challenges people are facing, and work towards practical, people-centred solutions. This includes launching a massive information campaign to ensure consumers are informed, empowered, and equipped to use the system confidently.

"The future of transport must be inclusive, accessible, and consumer-centred," Ms. Shandil emphasised. "We are calling on service providers to listen to the people who rely on these services daily and take decisive steps to fix what is broken."

Consumers facing issues with the E-ticketing services are advised to contact the Toll-Free National Consumer Helpline 155, or email complaints@consumersfiji.org.

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