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Consumer Council of Fiji



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29 May 2025

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Follow the right procedure when evicting Tenants**

Despite repeated warnings and previous public advisories, complaints related to unlawful and arbitrary evictions continue to pour in — prompting the Consumer Council of Fiji to renew its call for greater awareness and accountability in the rental housing sector. This is not the first time the Council is raising red flags about such practices, but the disturbing volume and nature of recent cases has made it necessary to spotlight the issue once again.

From 2022 to date, the Council has received a total of **1,626 complaints** related to landlord and tenancy matters, with a staggering monetary value of **\$823,610**. Out of this, **500 complaints specifically concern eviction-related issues**, valued at approximately **\$253,500**. While each case differs in circumstance, the common thread is clear: landlords taking matters into their own hands, often at the expense of tenants' rights and wellbeing.

“These are not just numbers — they are lived experiences of families and individuals being uprooted, often without cause or legal process,” said Council CEO **Seema Shandil**. “When a pregnant woman is evicted simply because of her condition, or a tenant is denied a bond refund on unfair grounds, it shows how vulnerable renters truly are in this system.”

In a recent case, a woman was told to vacate her flat with just a week's notice, even while repairs were being done on the premises she was still occupying. Another complainant reported being removed because she was pregnant, and later had \$70 deducted from her \$200 bond under questionable circumstances. A third complainant claimed a house leader, acting as landlord, was collecting inflated rents from multiple tenants and attempting to evict others without cause — all while exceeding the agreed rental threshold.

“These cases reflect a broken framework,” Shandil stated. “Without a Landlord-Tenancy Act or a tribunal to oversee such disputes, tenants are often left with no choice but to accept decisions that are neither fair nor legal.”

Fiji currently operates without comprehensive legislation specifically regulating rental housing. The existing framework consists solely of the *Self-Regulating Guideline for Landlord and Tenant in Fiji*, which serves as a non-binding reference for rental agreements. While formal eviction procedures do exist under common law - requiring written notices and potential court involvement - many landlords frequently bypass these legal channels. Instead, they often resort

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to informal eviction methods, some of which may violate tenants' legal rights. The consequences for tenants are severe: emotional trauma, disrupted schooling, job insecurity, and financial hardship from last-minute relocations.

The Council is urging tenants to document all communications, insist on formal agreements, and report any illegal actions. At the same time, landlords are reminded of their responsibilities under the law and the importance of following due process when dealing with rent issues or tenancy terminations. “Evictions must be lawful, justified, and respectful of human dignity,” said Shandil. “Until Fiji enacts legislation to govern this space, the onus remains on both parties to act in good faith — and on us as a society to demand better protections for those who rent.”

Consumers experiencing unfair treatment or facing eviction threats are encouraged to contact the Council via its toll-free number 155 or email [complaints@consumersfiji.org](mailto:complaints@consumersfiji.org).

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