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Feature Article

Why the Consumer Council of Fiji Exists?

In a rapidly changing marketplace, consumers today enjoy greater access to products and services than ever before, but they also face new risks, complex challenges, and situations where their rights may be overlooked. This is precisely why the Consumer Council of Fiji exists.

Established under the Consumer Council of Fiji Act 1976, the Council serves as an independent statutory body dedicated to protecting, empowering, and representing consumers nationwide. While the Council does not enforce penalties or regulate industries, it plays a pivotal role in ensuring that consumers are heard, supported, and assisted whenever they encounter difficulties.

At the heart of our work is a simple message: you are not alone. Whenever you face a consumer-related issue, you can call us, we exist to help you.

How We Serve You? The Core Divisions of the Council

The Council delivers its services through three divisions, each playing a unique but interconnected role in supporting consumers.

These are:

1. Alternative Dispute Resolution & Consumer Advisory (ADR)

Your first point of contact when you face any consumer issue. ADR is the frontline division, where thousands of consumers turn each year when something goes wrong. Whether the issue involves a misleading advertisement, faulty product, unresolved refund, unfair charge, poor service, or debt pressure, ADR officers provide guidance, assess the merit of the complaint, and mediate with traders to achieve a fair outcome.

ADR receives complaints across a wide spectrum, including:

- Landlord and tenancy disputes;
- Faulty household appliances;
- Motor vehicle repairs and purchases;
- Clothing, footwear, furniture, and second-hand products;

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- Construction and renovation issues;
- Professional services (legal, mechanical, electrical, plumbing);
- Beautician and hairdressing services;
- Courier, postal, and online shopping problems;
- Entertainment, event management, photography services;
- Restaurant and bar complaints;
- Laundry services, parking, rental vehicles; and more.

ADR also assists with fraud and scam complaints, helping consumers avoid financial losses and guiding them on the steps to take if they fall victim.

Debt and Credit Advisory

Through the RDMO function within ADR, consumers receive support on:

- Overwhelming debt;
- Moneylending issues;
- Unfair repayment terms;
- Hire purchase concerns; and
- Insurance claim delays or disputes.

Consumers should reach out immediately when they experience:

- A trader refusing to provide a refund;
- Delayed or denied warranty claims;
- Being charged hidden or unfair fees;
- Poor-quality or unsafe goods/services;
- Breaches of a tenancy agreement; and
- Any issue where you feel pressured, misled, or unfairly treated.

Every complaint matter, and the sooner you call us, the faster we can help.

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2. Research and Policy Analysis (RPA)

Turning your complaints into national solutions. The Research and Policy Analysis (RPA) division also manages specialised consumer complaints, particularly those that involve regulated sectors, essential services, or patterns of unfair market behaviour. These complaints often require deeper investigation, coordination with regulators, and evidence-based analysis to resolve.

RPA officers examine documents, analyse trends, identify gaps in industry practice, and work closely with relevant authorities to ensure that consumers are not disadvantaged by systemic issues affecting entire sectors.

Types of complaints RPA handles:

- Food and drink safety and quality concerns;
- Electricity, water, gas, and fuel-related complaints;
- Telecommunication, mobile, television, and internet service problems;
- Medical, dental, optical, and pharmaceutical services;
- Airline, travel agency, and public transport issues;
- VAT, receipt, overcharging and pricing disputes;
- Real estate and property-related matters;
- Shipping and postal service complaints; and
- Entertainment, gaming, and public office service issues.

Consumers should reach out immediately when they encounter industry-wide or technically complex issues, including:

- Repeated overcharging, incorrect billing, or pricing inconsistencies;
- Service disruptions or failures involving utilities, telecom, or public services;
- Unfair conduct by regulated industries, such as fuel, airlines, medical services, or pharmaceuticals;
- Concerns about food safety, contamination, or breaches of public health standards;

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- Travel or transport issues that affect safety, access, or contractual rights; and
- Any situation where a problem is not just personal, but affects multiple consumers or communities.

These complaints help the Council uncover wider market problems and push for changes that protect all Fijians.

3. Campaigns, Information & Media (CIM)

Empowering consumers through knowledge. CIM transforms data and research findings into public awareness initiatives that help consumers prevent issues before they occur. The division conducts:

- Community outreach and rural awareness programs;
- School sessions and youth education;
- Radio and TV talkback shows;
- Press releases and alerts;
- Social media campaigns; and
- Digital education materials.

CIM's work ensures that information does not sit in reports, it reaches households, villages, workplaces, and communities across Fiji, empowering people with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions.

Accessibility Across Fiji

The Council is committed to ensuring that every consumer, regardless of where they live, can reach us easily and receive timely support. Recognising that Fiji's geography includes remote islands, rural interiors, and maritime communities, the Council continues to expand and strengthen its accessibility so no one is left behind.

To achieve this, the Council operates from three strategically located offices across the country:

- **Suva Office (Headquarters):**
Handles national coordination and supports consumers in the Central and Eastern

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Divisions. It manages major policy, advocacy, complaints assessment, and public engagement functions.

- **Lautoka Office:**

Serves the Western Division, engaging actively with industries such as tourism, retail, telecommunications, and utilities. This office provides on-the-ground assistance to consumers across a wide geographic area, including rural and semi-urban communities.

- **Labasa Office:**

Supports the Northern Division, ensuring that consumers on Vanua Levu and surrounding maritime areas receive equal access to services, advice, and mediation.

Beyond physical offices, the Council has strengthened its digital and mobile reach to make assistance even easier:

- **National Consumer Helpline 155 (toll-free):**

Consumers can call from anywhere in Fiji to receive advice, lodge complaints, or request guidance. Trained officers provide real-time assistance and help consumers take immediate action.

- **Email & Online Platforms:**

Consumers can submit complaints or queries at any time via email complaints@consumersfiji.org or the Council's social media channels like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn. This is particularly useful for individuals in remote locations or those with limited mobility.

Our goal is simple: **Wherever you are in Fiji, help should always be within reach.**

Working Together for a Fair Marketplace

Consumer protection is not the responsibility of one institution alone, it thrives when consumers, communities, businesses, and the Council work together to promote fairness, accountability, and ethical conduct. This cycle ensures that every individual complaint contributes to wider reforms, stronger consumer safeguards, and better marketplace practices.

The most important part of this system is you, the consumer. You are our eyes and ears on the ground. The issues you report help prevent others from becoming victims of the same problems. The sooner we know, the sooner we can intervene.

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Consumer Council of Fiji



www.consumersfiji.org



Mobile App

If something does not feel right, call us.

If you believe you have been treated unfairly, call us.

If you are unsure about your rights, call us.

Together, we can build a marketplace where fairness is upheld, businesses operate ethically, and consumer rights are respected, not just in law, but in everyday practice.

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