



06 February 2026

FEATURE ARTICLE

When Repairs Never End, Why Fiji Needs Lemon Laws

Imagine buying a brand-new washing machine. Within weeks it stops working. You take it back for repairs under warranty. It's fixed temporarily. A month later, the same fault returns. Back it goes again. And again. Months pass, warranties tick down, and you are left without a working appliance, while being told, "It can be repaired."

For many consumers in Fiji, this is no longer a rare experience. The Consumer Council of Fiji has seen a steady stream of complaints involving repeatedly defective products, especially major household appliances like washing machines and refrigerators, and high-value items such as motor vehicles. These products are not defective just once, but over and over again, cycling endlessly between consumers and repair workshops.

This raises an important question: At what point does a faulty product stop being "repairable" and start being unacceptable? In many countries, the answer lies in what are known as Lemon Laws.

What Is a Lemon Law?

A Lemon Law is a consumer protection law designed to address products that have persistent defects that cannot be properly fixed within a reasonable time or number of repair attempts.

A product is considered a "lemon" when:

- It has serious defects that affect its use, safety, or value; and
- The defect continues despite multiple repair attempts, or
- The product spends an excessive amount of time out of service for repairs.

Under Lemon Laws, manufacturers may be legally required to:

- Replace the product, or
- Refund the consumer, either fully or partially.

These laws exist in countries such as the United States, Australia, Singapore, and parts of the European Union, and mostly apply to cars. While details differ, the principle is the same: consumers should not be trapped with products that repeatedly fail.

Why Lemon Laws in Particular?

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



Fiji's existing consumer laws recognise that goods must be fit for purpose. They also provide remedies when products are defective at the time of sale, or when a product is sold under misrepresentation. However, a critical gap emerges when a product is not faulty just once, but repeatedly.

Many consumers report being sent back to repair centres again and again, only to be told that the product is "fixed." Temporary solutions mask deeper defects, and warranties continue to run down while the consumer remains without proper use of the product. There is no clear point at which a consumer can reasonably say, "This product has failed too many times, I want my money back."

A Growing Problem, Backed by Data

Recent complaint trends reinforce just how serious this issue has become in Fiji. From 2020 to 2026, the Consumer Council recorded a total of 4,364 complaints related to electronic goods alone. This figure highlights how widespread faulty and unsatisfactory products are, and how many households are affected.

In many cases, traders import products from overseas markets and provide only limited warranty periods. Once those warranties expire, or when repairs fail to permanently resolve the problem, consumers are left with few practical options. While protections exist under the Sale of Goods Act, repeated product failures often do not result in meaningful remedies such as refunds or replacements.

As more affordable and unfamiliar brands enter the market, consumers are increasingly forced to rely on comparative shopping. However, consumers may not always have access to information about a product's quality, durability, or long-term performance. Affordability alone does not guarantee value. Ultimately, it is the quality of a product that determines whether it truly serves its purpose.

Case Study: The Faulty Refrigerator

A Suva family purchased a refrigerator for \$1,800 from a local retailer. After a few months of normal use, the appliance began leaking water from the freezer section. The supplier sent repair technicians on multiple occasions, offering different explanations, from a compressor fault to an overloaded freezer, yet the problem persisted.

The refrigerator was taken in for repairs several times, with the retailer later claiming no fault could be detected in the workshop. Each time the appliance was returned, the leakage

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: consumerlkt@connect.com.fj

Labasa/North

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



continued. During the prolonged repair cycle, the family was forced to purchase a separate chest freezer to store their frozen food.

Eventually, just as the one-year warranty period was ending, the retailer agreed to replace the refrigerator. In this case, the appliance was still under warranty. Had it not been, the consumer would have been left to bear the full cost of repeated repairs for a product that never functioned properly.

These experiences are not isolated. They reflect a wider and growing concern that low-grade, substandard, or even rejected foreign stock can enter Fiji's market with insufficient safeguards in place for consumers.

Why This Issue Cannot be Ignored?

Every Fijian deserves access to products that last, not defective goods that drain household budgets and undermine trust in the marketplace. While current laws require goods to be fit for purpose, they often lack strong enforcement mechanisms when defects occur repeatedly over time.

Without Lemon Laws, the burden remains largely on consumers. They lose time, money, and confidence, while poor-quality products continue circulating in the market. This creates an uneven playing field where responsible businesses compete against suppliers who cut corners on quality.

Fiji's reliance on imports makes this issue even more pressing. Without clear legal standards holding manufacturers and importers accountable, the country risks becoming a dumping ground for inferior goods that would not meet consumer protection standards elsewhere.

What Lemon Laws Could Mean for Fiji?

Introducing Lemon Laws in Fiji would be a forward-looking and practical step. Such laws would not be anti-business. On the contrary, they would strengthen the market by setting clear expectations for quality and accountability.

A Fijian Lemon Law framework could:

- Define how many repair attempts are reasonable;
- Set limits on how long a product can remain out of service;
- Require refunds or replacements when those limits are exceeded; and
- Apply to major consumer goods such as appliances and vehicles.

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: consumerlkt@connect.com.fj

Labasa/North

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



@CCoFiji



Consumer Council of Fiji



www.consumersfiji.org



Mobile App

By shifting responsibility back onto manufacturers, importers, and retailers, Lemon Laws would encourage higher-quality products to enter the market and discourage repeated consumer disputes.

Advice to Consumers

Consumers should be cautious of products that appear substandard or require repeated repairs. The first step is to choose trusted, reputable brands. Today, most well-known products have online reviews from customers who have already purchased and used them. A quick five-minute online search can often reveal whether a product has a history of faults or poor performance.

However, if you do end up with a product that turns out to be a “lemon,” it is important to act promptly. Make sure you understand your warranty and what it covers. Keep a photo or copy of your warranty documents in case the originals are misplaced. If a fault develops, take the item in for repairs as soon as possible and keep records of each repair attempt.

If the product is not repaired to your satisfaction and continues to malfunction, return it again and clearly explain the issue. Where a product fails more than two times for the same problem, consumers should begin demanding a replacement from the retailer rather than accepting endless repairs. Being proactive can prevent unnecessary expenses and frustration.

If you need guidance or support, contact the Consumer Council of Fiji for assistance.

What the Council Is Doing?

The Consumer Council of Fiji will continue to actively engage with policymakers to advocate for the introduction of Lemon Laws in the country. While legislative change can take time, the Council’s advocacy efforts are ongoing and focused on strengthening consumer protections against repeatedly defective products.

At the same time, the Council is working to promote higher product standards and accountability within the market. This includes raising awareness among consumers and encouraging businesses to ensure that quality goods enter the Fijian market, rather than allowing the country to become a dumping ground for substandard or rejected products.

Conclusion

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



@CCoFiji



Consumer Council of Fiji



www.consumersfiji.org



Mobile App

When a product fails repeatedly, repairs alone are not always the answer. Fiji must begin a national conversation on whether consumers should continue bearing the cost of poor-quality goods, or whether the law should step in to ensure fairness.

Lemon Laws would not solve every consumer issue, but they would ensure that when life gives Fijian consumers lemons, they are not forced to live with them.

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