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Consumer Council of Fiji



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PRESS RELEASE

Council Vindicated in "Rotten Meat" Negligence Case

The Consumer Council of Fiji welcomes the landmark judgment delivered by the High Court in Suva yesterday, which dismissed a long-running lawsuit brought by Hansons Supermarket regarding the condemnation and destruction of unfit meat products. The judgement sets a powerful precedent, affirming protections provided to the Council by the *Consumer Council of Fiji Act*.

The case, which named the Consumer Council of Fiji as a defendant alongside the Nasinu Town Council and the Fiji Sun, centered on a 2019 inspection where a large quantity of meat and frozen goods were found to be unfit for human consumption. The plaintiff alleged that the Council acted negligently and sought damages for loss of reputation following the publication of the findings.

In a decisive ruling, the High Court clarified the legal standing of the Council, stating that the Council, as a statutory body, does not owe a common law duty of care to businesses when carrying out its functions. Its legal and moral obligation is to protect the health and interests of the Fijian public.

Furthermore, the judgment reinforces the protections provided under Section 12 of the Consumer Council Act, which shields the Council from liability for actions taken in good faith during the course of its duties.

"This is a victory for every Fijian consumer. For too long, some traders have used the threat of legal action to silence advocacy and hide unethical practices. This judgment sets a powerful precedent: the Council will not be intimidated for doing its job. Our priority is, and always will be, public safety over private profit," said CEO Seema Shandil.

The supermarket has been ordered to pay \$5,000 in costs to the Council. This ruling strengthens the Council's ongoing mandate to "name and shame" unscrupulous traders who repeatedly breach food safety regulations. The Council urges all retailers to view this not as a defeat for the business community, but as a standard-setting moment for food safety and corporate accountability in Fiji.

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