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PRESS RELEASE

Consumers Urged to Exercise Caution When Shopping Online

A growing number of consumers are being duped by online sellers, who seem to be more interested in making a quick buck on social media, rather than operating a legitimate business.

The Consumer Council of Fiji has received 35 complaints in recent months, relating to several online trading platforms believed to be operated by the same individual. The complaints involve Trend Fiji (15 complaints), Entertainment Hub/Playhub (16 complaints), Pacific Closet (2 complaints), and Pacifika Playhub (2 complaints).

A closer examination of the modus operandi of all these traders reveals a consistent pattern; consumers make payments after responding to advertisements promoting a range of products on social media, however, once payment is made, delivery of the goods allegedly fail to materialise. Consumers further allege that their attempts to obtain updates or request refunds have either been ignored or met with repeated assurances that were never fulfilled.

Council Chief Executive Officer Seema Shandil said the increasing number of complaints is concerning and serves as an important reminder for consumers to exercise caution when purchasing goods from online traders. "While online shopping offers convenience and greater choice, consumers should never assume that an online business is legitimate simply because it has an active social media presence. Before making any payment, consumers should take time to verify the seller, look for genuine customer feedback, and ensure there are clear delivery arrangements and refund policies in place," she said.

Ms. Shandil said consumers should be particularly cautious when dealing with sellers who require full payment before dispatching goods, especially where there is limited information about the business or no established track record.

She also encouraged consumers to keep copies of advertisements, payment receipts, invoices, and all communications with online traders, as these documents can assist in resolving disputes should problems arise.

Consumers who experience non-delivery of goods, unreasonable delays, or difficulties obtaining refunds are encouraged to report the matter to the Council through our National Consumer Helpline: 155 or email at complaints@consumersfiji.org.

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: RC.ltk@consumersfiji.org

Labasa/North

Shop 2, Mudaliar Investment
Sangam Avenue Street
P.O. Box 64, Labasa
Phone: 8812559
Email: RC.lbs@consumersfiji.org