



Written Question

Response by the Minister for Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport, Hon.
Faiyaz S. Koya

Wednesday, 22 September, 2021

Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua to move –

“Can the Minister provide the number and type of complaints and legal proceedings registered and being acted upon by the Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission, from 2018 to date”

Mr. Speaker I thank the Honourable member for the Written Question. In this regard, I submit herein, my response.

Introduction

The FCCC has been effectively involved in promotion of competition and fair trade, regulating prices of certain goods and services, to ensure welfare of all Fijians are fully accounted for.

The dynamic Board and team of FCCC through its hard work ensures that Fijians are not cheated and traders continue to trade in a fair and equitable manner, especially in these uncertain time. And this has been evident with the statistics.

Statistics on Type Complaints and Legal Proceedings

Since 2018 to date, FCCC has filed a total of 618 cases in court. The closure of cases from court between the years 2018 to 2021 sum up to 215 cases which is 35% of the total cases filed.

FCCC puts in all efforts to reach out to the furthest places in Fiji with a total of 35,204 pricing inspections being conducted in the stated period. Of the total, 32,338 inspections were conducted in the urban and rural areas, and 2,866 inspections were in maritime areas.

In addition, FCCC received a total of 4,201 rent complaints between 2018 to 2021 financial years – an average increase of 2.5% per financial year. The breakdown of the nature of rent cases is as follows:

- i. Illegal Rent Increase – 186 cases;
- ii. Rent Bond Complaints – 210 cases;
- iii. Complaints regarding keeping of Records – 458 cases;
- iv. Eviction Complaints – 191 cases; and
- v. Others – 164 cases

In contrast to Rent complaints, FCCC also received a total of 2,182 Consumer Protection Complaints which relates to grievances raised from breach of any provision(s) of Part 7 of the FCCC Act 2010.

Mediation

In the interest of understanding FCCC's enforcement procedures, not all complaints are directly taken to Court for litigation. FCCC engages in a collaborative approach, where complaints are lodged and request for first response to the allegation is put to the trader/business. While awaiting a response, FCCC considering the nature of the complaints, call both parties in for Mediation to resolve the issues amicably and enter into an Enforceable Undertaking. Therefore, most of the complaints lodged to FCCC are taken through the Mediation process. On that note, FCCC has established an Alternative Dispute Resolution Team to conduct these mediations to streamline the investigation process within.

COVID-19 Response and Awareness

Further to FCCC's operations, since the outbreak of the pandemic in April 2021, FCCC implemented its COVID-19 Response Operations to which 10,683 inspections have been conducted. These activities include:

- i. Stock and supply chain disruption(s) assistance which involves facilitating transition of goods between borders to ensure adequate supply to distributors and retailers within containment zones;
- ii. Stock supply surveillance, which is concerned with the monitoring of adequate supply of basic food items during the pandemic;

- iii. Enforcement of COVID-19 Business Health & Safety Protocols and Public health (Infectious Diseases) (Infringement Notices) Regulations 2021 in collaboration with Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Ministry of Commerce, Trade Tourism, Trade and Transport (MCTTT) and Fiji Police Force (FPF);
- iv. Price gouging monitoring and investigations;
- v. Business assistance intended for any sole trader or business engaged in trade or commerce that requires assistance on commercial rent issues due to COVID-19 impact, assistance with any of its financial repayments and enquiries on Government initiatives; and
- vi. Communication and awareness which includes social media and business community awareness on COVID-19 Health and Safety protocols in partnership with MCTTT, Town Councils, FPF and Commissioner Central's Office.

These are unprecedented times, and with the vigilant work of FCCC, we continue to promote fair trade, to protect markets and to promote effective competition.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for according me the opportunity to respond to this written question.