



MEDIA STATEMENT

CONSUMER PROTECTION OFFICE STILL EXCEL IN SERVICING CONSUMERS

23 June 2012

Consumer rights are constitutional rights and the Consumer Protection Office in the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs is working hard to ensure that these rights are not violated in the Free State Province. During the 1st quarter of 2012/13 fiscal year this office has received 164 complaints from consumers and 144 cases were investigated and resolved by Trade and Industry Advisors within the respective office and the remaining 20 cases were resolved by the Consumer Court.

Unscrupulous businesses often take consumers for a ride and rob them of their hard earned money. Unsuspecting consumers often fall prey to these harmful business practices because they are not aware of their rights.

According to Free State Consumer Protection Act 14 of 1998, consumers have eight key rights and they are: the right to be heard, the right to safety, the right to redress, the right to a healthy environment, the right to be informed, the right to choose, the right to consumer education and the right to satisfaction of basic needs.

Out of all cases received 30% of complaints are about motor vehicles, followed by 20% - furniture, 20% electrical appliances, 15% - housing, 10% - clothing, 10% - cell phone, 10% toys, 10% medical aid and 10% - guesthouses.

With motor vehicles, dealers fail to provide after-sales service and documents to consumers which results in consumers failing to produce proof of purchase or payment, ownership of products and agreement contract. With regard to furniture and electrical appliances, dealers sell defective goods to consumers and refuse to take them back. With cell phones, the problem is hidden costs charged by the dealer, therefore resulting in consumers having to pay excessive charges which they did not agree on.

The Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs once again invite everybody who has a reason to believe that his/her consumer rights have been infringed to contact the Consumer Protection Office. Complaints can be lodged telephonically, written either by fax/post or in person. Consumers can also look for more information on the departmental website.

Consumers can complain if the dealer does not want to refund them when goods do not perform according to the standards that the customers were made to believe they would; the goods are faulty and the customers were not aware or advised of the fault/s during the

COMMUNICATION & ICT

34 Bojanala Building
Markgraaf Street
Bloemfontein
9300

Private Bag X 20801
Bloemfontein
9300

Tel +27 (0)51 400 9542
Fax +27 (0)51 400 9541
e-mail: tauk@detea.fs.gov.za

www.dteea.fs.gov.za

time of purchase; the goods are not the same as those shown to the customers prior to delivery of the goods; and if the goods are not as described.

The services of the Consumer Protection Office are free of charge and Free Staters are urged to take advantage of this service that government offers to its people. Remember, "You have rights as a consumer. Understand them. Enforce them".

Consumers can contact the Consumer Protection Office at:

Tel: 051 400 4854/4856
Fax: 086 514 6112
E-mail: radikelt@detea.fs.gov.za
Website: www.detea.fs.gov.za
Post: P.O Box 20801, Bloemfontein, 9301
Office: Room 525
98 Agriculture Building (south wing)
Zastron Street
Bloemfontein

End!

**Compiled by Communication Unit
Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs**

For more information please contact Elsie Ntsane on 051 400 9465/9550 or e-mail ntsane@detea.fs.gov.za