



**the detea**

the department of economic  
development, tourism and  
environmental affairs  
FREE STATE PROVINCE

## TACKLING UNFAIR BUSINESS PRACTICES IN THE FREE STATE

Unfair and harmful business practices resulting in many consumers losing their hard earned cash are a source of great concern to MEC Mamiki Qabathe, MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs in the Free State. This is evidenced by the flood of consumer complaints and enquiries at the Free State Consumer Protection Office.

During the second quarter, a total of 151 cases were reported and 3 of those were resolved by the consumer court and 148 were resolved by trade and industry advisors in the office. In October alone, 48 cases were reported and 47 of those were resolved by the office and 1 by the consumer court. The total cash that was returned back to the pockets of the consumers for the four months was R1,186 557.40.

Mamiki Qabathe, MEC for DETEA said government is doing all in its power to educate consumers about their rights through holding Consumer Education Awareness Campaigns in different places and radio slots. People according to the MEC get carried away and fall for old sale tricks offering discounts and bargains.

At the moment, consumer courts sittings rotate in different districts of the province in an effort to reach as many people as possible. MEC Qabathe said “this way we are taking service to the people and this is also done to save them transport costs and the inconvenience of having to find accommodation for those who come from far.

“To a certain extent, I would like to believe that people are now aware of the Consumer Protection Office and its services because of more and more complaints being reported in the office on a daily basis of which some are from other districts of the province”. But this is an on-going process and I also believe that more can be done”, alluded MEC Qabathe.

MEC Qabathe warned consumers that with festive season approaching, it is imperative that consumers are extremely careful with their hard earned moneys as all sorts of businesses would be advertising vigorously to sell their products. And it is during these times that consumers find themselves having parted with their cash unnecessarily.

MEC said that consumers are fore-warned not to be careless with their signatures and should make sure that every document they attest their signatures, copies are made. Direct marketing advertising tele sales are also becoming a headache where unsuspecting consumers are often lured into contracts under the pretext they have won one thing or their cell phone number has been selected as the winner or loyal customer.

The next roll of court cases starts from 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012 until 7<sup>th</sup> December 2012.

### **Consumers can contact the Consumer Protection Office at:**

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