



Government of
The Republic
of Vanuatu



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Radiocommunication
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World Consumer Rights Day, 15th March 2018 at Tasanak Park, Seafront Stage, Port Vila, Vanuatu



Theme: *'Making Digital Market Places Fairer'*

1. TABLE OF CONTENT

Contents

1. table of content	2
2. Introduction	3
3. Objectives and Expected Outcome of the ACTIVITY	3
4. activities of the day	5
4.1 Welcome speech by the Telecom Regulator	5
4.2 Face to Face Interview	5
4.3 Import products awareness by the Director of Customs and Inland Revenue.	6
4.4 Police TokTok on Cybercrime	6
4.5 VTBC Live Panel Discussion	6
4.6 Telecommunication Operators (Digicel and TVL)	6
4.7 Hotels and Resorts	7
4.8 Quiz and Answers	7
4.9 FM107 Black Thunder	7
5. Actions	8
6. AttenDEES	8
7. Promotion	8
8. Pictures	9
9. Conclusion	9

2. INTRODUCTION

Building on from one of the Telecommunication and Radiocommunications Regulator's core functions on Consumer Protections and Relations, and as part of TRR's 2018 and onwards annual work plan, TRR with assistance of its Partners the Vanuatu Police Force through its **Crime and Prevention Unit, Vanuatu National Youth Council (VNYC), Woman Against Crime and Corruption (WACC)** successfully coordinated, promoted and celebrated the World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD) on the 15th March 2018, at Tasanak Park, Seafront stage, Port Vila, Vanuatu.

Occasionally on the 15th of March, Consumers International, the committed and recognized body of 240 members of the Association across 120 countries in the world specifically celebrate this day amongst member countries to advocate for the rights of Consumers to ensure knowledge and recognition for these basic rights of all consumers, and demanding for those rights to be respected and protected according to each individual's constitutional rights.

This year's theme for WCRD is **"Making Digital Market Place Fairer"**. As published in the Consumer International website, over 3 billion or 40% of the world's population is now online, compared with just 1% in 1995, with all projections suggesting this number will continue to rise. Thus this signifies that people are moving more to do e-commerce services daily. In doing so, this has raised great concern on the Consumer's Protection Security and Privacy and importantly trust and confidence in their daily online activities.

TRR spearheaded the celebration as the theme was related to digital market. Also most importantly, there is no institution or government agency is able to take the initiative to organize and promote the rights and responsibilities of the overall consumers across Vanuatu. Thus, TRR joining together with its stakeholders to highlight and raise awareness of the issues that is important to consumers around the country and make the biggest impact in the country. TRR has always showing its willingness to work together on important matters that will positive impact the citizens of Vanuatu, share its concern on consumer rights and desire to see mechanism put in place to address the needs and issues of consumer related issues and protection in Vanuatu.

3. OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOME OF THE ACTIVITY

The main aim of this year's event is to promote awareness on importance of making sure that internet users/ consumers:

- Have Access to fair and secure internet;
- Understand their rights and responsibilities before they use internet to do trade and marketing activities, sales and purchases etc.;

- Are assisted and have support to take Action against scams and fraud through online activities;
- Are assured better protection online in doing business and other needed activities.

The expected take home messages and importantly the actions required from this event is for consumers, respective authorities, responsible Government departments/ministries and Services Providers:

- To make sure that there are measures in place to minimize these risks to online consumers or users who rely on online services to satisfy their needs and wants;
- To provide support and assistance to ICT/Telecommunications /Internet consumers on required information and actions that must be observed and action when required;
- To signal to the government of Vanuatu the importance of establishing the Consumer Rights and Protection mechanism and or body that will oversee the consumer rights and protection issues that are affecting the good citizens of Vanuatu today;
- To observe mechanism and measures that are currently in place and promote more of their existence for consumers to be aware of;
- And to signal to online/internet service providers the importance of creating an avenue to build consumer trust and confidence as consumers are key drivers of the economy.

There are other many discussions and sharing of experiences by the business organizations and responsible organizations on Consumer experiences on that day, including key stakeholders (Customs and Inland Revenue, Price Controller, Women Against Crime and Corruption, Police through crime prevention unit, intellectual property rights, Hotels, Telecommunications service providers (TVL and Digicel), the school teachers in specific schools such as Central school, the Media outlet (FM107) and leaders who played some responsibilities in overseeing the affairs of the consumers in general in Vanuatu.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE DAY

There were seven (7) main activities happening during the full day celebrations. The main celebration occurred at seafront stage, but viewers across the country followed through the local FM station radio FM107. The FM107 Black **Thunder** van drove around the capital Port Vila and the nearby communities and schools to deliver awareness and sharing of TRR bookmarks (*which has directions on what to do when any consumer has an issue*) and wrist bands (*which promotes “you must know your rights and duties before you surf online”*) that carried the message of the day. There was also live coverage on the local Television (TV) and Facebook broadcasting page. The Panel discussion session was broadcasted live on TV and Facebook during the lunch hour from 12 to 1pm. International viewers also participated in the celebrations.

4.1 Welcome speech by the Telecom Regulator

The Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulator Ms Dalsie Baniala, made it clear in the beginning of her speech as to why TRR spearheaded the event and shared the passion it has towards the consumers in the country. She strongly appealed to the National Government, private companies, public and other stakeholders to work together to address the challenges faced by consumers and to develop practical solutions would assist the consumers when they have issues with their service providers. She also continued to emphasize on the need to establish a mechanism that would assist the consumers in the near future.

4.2 Face to Face Interview

This was interactive program or exercise in which we interview members of the general public, some of which were key leaders and Youth representatives about the importance of the day celebration. The discussions also focused on the life experiences of some consumers who purchased goods online and also goods physically purchased in the shops. Most interviewees strongly emphasised that they need a body to represent them to address their consumer issues. One of the interviewees mention that, they wanted an office or a body to run to when they are not happy with the service provided by the service provider or product they purchased. Generally, most listeners learned a lot and desired to see real changes taking place in the country for the betterment of the consumers in order to raise their concerns and have them resolved their issues faced in the market environment both locally and internationally.

4.3 Import products awareness by the Director of Customs and Inland Revenue.

The Director of Customs and Inland Revenue Mr. Benjamin Malas made a strong call to all the government ministries and departments to work together to set up a consumer council or body which is a long time cry for this nation. He said “We cannot sit back and hope consumers are happy when there is no authorities to fight and speak on their behalf within our local communities” says the Director. It was very interesting to see many members of the public ask questions to Mr. Mala and he responded to all their questions. He concluded by saying, “I was happy to move out of the office and promote what Customs and Inland Revenue did for this country and we need to work together, share ideas together fight the injustice in the market place for the best interest of all”.

4.4 Police TokTok on Cybercrime

A representative of the Vanuatu Police Force through its Crime Prevention Unit conducted awareness on what is cybercrime and its consequences. The responses was very pleasing when members of the general public ask questions and provided positive comments about the discussion. This is one of the avenue where police come to promote the activities they conducted to promote a safe and secure internet surfers. People come about to know why such awareness is very important in their life’s and families especially school children.

4.5 VTBC Live Panel Discussion

This is one of the main highlights of the day’s program in which key senior officers of the National government and private institutions came and shared their expertise and practical solutions which is the main aim of the day celebration. The discussion was live on TV and Facebook live and the impact was encouraging.

Below is the list of panellist and their respective institutions;

- **Dalsie Baniala** – Regulator of Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Industry
- **Marakon Alilee** – Price Controller at the Office of Price Control Unit
- **Jenny Ligo Viregagaru** – Chairman of Woman Against Crime and Corruption
- **Benjamin Malas** – Director of Customs and Inland Revenue
- **Merilyn Temakon** – Private Consultant, on Intellectual property rights
- **Grenly Kender** – CPO, Office of Crime prevention Unit, Vanuatu Police Force

4.6 Telecommunication Operators (Digicel and TVL)

Both Telecom Operators provided valuable information about the rights and responsibilities of the customer. It was interesting to note from the discussion, how they come to explain the difference

between the customer and consumer. A customer has a business obligation with his or her Service Provider, while a consumer generally refers to any individual enjoying any products or services provided by any service providers or product suppliers. But, an individual can be both a customer and consumer in a business transaction. It was great to see, both operators emphasizing more on the best practice that needs to be upheld by the customer. A clear information delivered to the customers to be fully aware of are the terms and conditions of the services they provided before engage in. Telecom Operators spend time on the issues of addressing complaints by the customers. The customer needs to address disputes or complaint directly to their customer care services or agents of the services providers whenever they have issues and not on social media. If they are not satisfy with their solution provided then they can raise their issue to the Regulators Office especially on Telecommunications issues.

4.7 Hotels and Resorts

Reservation Manager at Mooring Hotel (Vanuatu) Limited delivered a very important information about their daily task especially online bookings, payments and identification of scam messages. This information really sinks in the heart of audiences and many questions were raised around hotel industry and its online services. It was a very interactive season because the discussion was based on some real life experiences and how hotels resolved these issues. It would be good to see more hotels engage in the future to share their experiences and provide workable solutions in dealing with those issues.

4.8 Quiz and Answers

Finally, quiz questions were asked around the theme of the event and prizes were given out to those who respond to those questions. It was funny and existing because school children and adults participate in the activity and they really wanted more questions to be asked, but the time did not allow it. The purpose of the exercise is to see whether the audience know about the content of the program.

4.9 FM107 Black Thunder

Black thunder is the name given to a fully equip vehicle owned by Capital FM107 that is promoting businesses or events from one location to another and at the same time live on radio. The vehicle was used as part of the celebrations for the whole day event to visit one school and seven nearby communities to help raise the awareness about consumer rights. The details as follows:

Schools

- Central school

Local communities

- Port Vila Market
- Manples Market

- Freshwota Park
- Korman Market
- Seaside Paama community and school
- Ohlen Mataso
- Blacksand community
- Mele community

5. ACTIONS

There were a number of actions required by stakeholders who have attended the event to work on. Some of which are listed below:

1. Work together to draft a concept paper to the council of ministers (COM) for their considerations;
2. Work together to form up a Consumer Right & Protection Committee;
3. Help educate the general public about their rights and responsibilities in all avenues they can;
4. Other forms of information delivery to the general public.

6. ATTENDEES

200 – 300 participants at the seafront stage including children but not only that, FM107 plays a significance role in informing consumers across the country about the celebration of consumer rights. The live coverage of the event covered by local FM107 station radio and over the internet help reach handful of consumers especially international followers who followed the live stream during the day event.

7. PROMOTION

An extensive promotional campaign was carried out in local media outlets to promote the event. The detail as follows;

- Press Release on Vanuatu Daily Post weekend Paper (10/03/2018)
- FM107 Talk back Show on 13/03/2017
- FM98 Talk back Show on 13/03/2017
- Weekly Focus program on FM107 on the 14/03/2018
- Video Interview done by Further Arts to promote world Consumer Rights Day (13/03/2018)
- FM107 Radio Advertising - 3 spots/day x 30 seconds ad for 4 days on 12/03/2018
- Customer Text Messages deliver by both Telecom Operators TVL and Digicel for three days (13-15th March 2018)

8. PICTURES



More Pictures at www.facebook.com/TRRVanuatu/

9. CONCLUSION

This year's World Consumer Right Day celebration has shown that there is a great need to set up a Consumer Rights & Protection Council or Body to cater for consumer issues in the country. The bottom line for all discussions and presentation was based around the idea of setting up a body to speak on behalf of the consumers of all services and products in the country. The report explains it well in detail. The stakeholders agrees to submit a concept paper to the council of ministers to request the national government to set up a consumer rights body in the country. However, 2018 Consumer Right Day celebration was a successful one.

This country needs a consumer Rights & Protection Commission