



World Consumer Rights Day
Seafront Tasanak Park, Port Vila, Vanuatu
15th March 2019



Theme: *'Trusted smart Products'*

1. INTRODUCTION

Each year, since 2015, The Telecommunications, Radiocommunications and Broadcasting Regulator (TRBR) facilitates the celebration of the World Consumer Rights Day in Vanuatu. TRBR coordinated the event's logistics and programme, with the support and contribution from all the stakeholders of the public sector, the private sector, NGOs and the civil society. The event is celebrated in a way to ensure that the rights of all consumers are known, protected and consumers are protected against any form of market abuse and social injustice which could undermine these rights.

“Trusted Smart Product” is the theme for the 2019 World Consumer Rights Day. In line with the digital innovations and technological evolutions, the theme drew more focus on how smart products could impact a consumer's life in both a positive and negative way and the prerequisite consumers must have before engaging in the usage of smart products and services.

This year's program was designed to facilitate the delivery of basic knowledge and advice about consumers' basic rights, and the procedures or mechanism in place that consumers can and should use whenever they feel their rights as a consumer is not being respected. This was in strive to promote a safe environment, fair treatment and transparency when dealing with consumer rights.

There was over 400 people present throughout the day at the Seafront Park including the students and members of the public. The information was also disseminated around Port-Vila with a mobile team and to the remote areas and other islands through radio live coverage sponsored by multiple radio broadcasters.

2. OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOME OF THE ACTIVITY

The main aim of this year's event is to raise awareness to the general consumers on their rights as consumers of goods and services, and at the same time provide a platform to service providers and retailers to emphasize on the quality of the services they provide and the efforts they are putting up to ensure consumer rights are respected and they avail higher quality products to their customers. TRBR has arranged for public institutions, associations, non-government organizations and business houses to come together and work towards a common goal which is consumer protection. The consumers are the kings and queens of their business and public institutions established up to provide public services to the consumers.

The expected key message for the consumers, respective authorities, responsible Government departments/ministries and Services Providers is;

- ✓ Have Access to fair and trusted products.
- ✓ Understand their rights and responsibilities before engaging in the usage of services or products.
- ✓ Enjoy products and services that comply with set criteria to meet a certain quality.
- ✓ To make sure the smart product they use either at a personal or professional level must be safe and secure.
- ✓ Service and goods providers should provide information to their consumer so they may know if a product and services they use can be trusted or not.
- ✓ To raise awareness on the mechanisms in place for consumers to raise their complaint to the relevant institutions whenever a complaint arises.
- ✓ Have access to products and services.
- ✓ For consumers to understand their rights and responsibilities before they use internet for transactions or use smart products.
- ✓ For the National Government to set up a commission or body to cater for the consumer rights and issues within the country.

3. HIGHT LIGHTS OF THE MAIN ACTIVITIES ON THE DAY

ACTIVITIES OF THE DAY

There were several activities planned to highlight the day and signifies the importance of the day celebration.

The official speeches

The Telecommunication Radiocommunications and Broadcasting Regulators' welcome speech was delivered by a TRBR Manager on behalf of the Regulator and the Official Opening speech was delivered by the Honourable Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, Honourable Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas who is the Minister responsible for the ICT, Telecommunication and Broadcasting.

Both speakers outlined a number of issues on the relevance of the theme of the day event. Also such celebration provides a good avenue to discuss and address real issues that are faced by both consumers and service providers. It also highlights the positive and negative impacts as a consequence of the use of smart products within the country and the challenges that come with it. With the availability and access to new technologies in Vanuatu it has become a must to uphold our cultural and traditional values and attitudes for the betterment of this country and its future generations and at the same time adapt to technological developments. At the same time, for the citizens of Vanuatu to fully benefit from these technological evolutions, the existing services provided to the people should be fair and made available to those living in rural areas as well. The Regulator strongly emphasizes that all stakeholders need to work collaboratively to address and promote the rights of consumers.

Open forum session

There were two different open forum session on that day. The first one which took place in the morning was comprised of public institutions and the second one which took place in the afternoon was comprised of service providers or business houses.

The main focus of these two forum sessions was to convey information to consumers across the country on their rights, the mechanism in place that can be activated to protect those rights, and probable future evolutions of the consumer rights from the public sector perspective and from the private sector perspective.

Public institution

The first discussion was centred on how public institution work to address the consumers issue with in their respective institution , what are the policy or legal framework in place to work with consumers in the country. One of the important point discussed by these institutions is whether there is need to establish a national consumer organization that will be responsible for protecting consumer rights across the board. The discussion was very successful with active interaction from the general public.

A number of important public institution had representatives in the discussion:

- Telecommunications, Radiocommunications and Broadcasting Regulator (TRBR)
- Utility Regulatory Authority (URA),
- Vanuatu Bureau of standard (VBR) ,
- Department of Customs and Inland Revenue,
- Office of the Marine Regulator (OMR) ,
- Ministry of Health.
- Vanuatu Police Force Crime Prevention Unit
- Vanuatu National Council of Women

Private sector

The discussion with the private sector was more focused on trusted smart product with the challenges and opportunities that these products may come with. It was also an opportunity to address few common issues raised by consumers. The affordability of the services and accessibility of the services to the end users or the consumers. Service providers are so keen to discuss these issues openly to provide some fair knowledge and understanding to consumers on how products or service are priced or what are factors taken into account to price a product. Accessibility of the service is also an important area of discussion and operators assured the audience that it is part of their mission to ensure that people in the far or remote areas also have access to basic service needed in particularly the telecommunication and broadcasting sector.

Few Business houses responded positively to the invitation to partake in the forum discussion:

- Digicel Vanuatu
- Telecom Vanuatu Limited (TVL)
- Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC)
- Capital FM 107
- WILCO

Other Side activities

TRBR also capitalized on other avenues to reach a larger audience, especially people residing outside of Port-Vila and those living in outer islands including communities that could not attend the event at the Seafront Park on that day. The exercise has been successful through the use of a mobile station of one of Vanuatu's famous radio station FM 107, Black Thunder. The Black Thunder services was used to directly raise awareness in communities around Port-Vila and the distribution of wristbands. The wrist band is used as a communications tool that would remind individuals of the fact that they have rights and that TRBR is one of the statutory bodies in place that plays a role in protecting those rights. These wrist band was labelled with

the theme of the Day and design into three (3) versions, one in English, one in French and one in Bislama. Communities visited include:

- Seaside Paama market
- Freshwota Park
- Anamburu Park and
- Manples Market

Quiz session

TRBR also provided incentive to participants of the day by asking twenty questions relating to the consumer rights day with giveaway of VUV 20,000 credit sponsored by the two major telecommunications service providers. Each participants received a VUV 1000 credit either from TVL or Digicel depending on the primary sim they have.

Talk Back show session

The session was also a high light which gave an opportunity to people in other parts of the country to have their say on the theme and how consumers should be treated. A lot of discussion took place and interaction from consumers also raised their concerns on air. The session was organized by FM107 and their famous announcers Mr. Moses Steven and one of the founder fathers of Vanuatu's independence and also first president of the Republic of Vanuatu Mr, George Sokamanu

Promotional activities of the event

TRBR has taken a proactive approach to promote the event prior the actual day in order to inform the general public on what will be expected in that day.

- Press Release on Vanuatu Daily Post weekend Paper (09/03/2019)
- FM107 Talk back Show on 11/03/2019
- FM98 Live interview on 11/03/2019
- Customer Text Messages delivered by both Telecom Operators TVL and Digicel for two days (14-15th March 2019)
- A 3 size coloured poster put around Port Vila, Town and nearby communities

Key remarks

As discussed above, there are number of important discussion that highlighted the day on the issue that consumer are facing and what needs to be done at the national level

- There should be a collaborative approach with all the respective authorities Work together to form a Consumer Right & Protection Committee
- There should be a national recognition of the day which, the ministry concerned should take the lead on to ensure that the overall concerns of consumers are recognised and protected
- Continues support from each authority to provide consumer awareness and education to the people of Vanuatu

4. PICTURES





More Pictures at [www.facebook.com/TRBR Vanuatu](https://www.facebook.com/TRBR-Vanuatu)

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the event was very successful and a lot of information was relayed to the public through awareness, speeches and discussions towards addressing important consumer issues, rights and needs. It was also very encouraging to see good participation and feedbacks from audience from other islands through live media outlets.

This year's World Consumer Right Day brought forward the important need to address consumer rights and needs at a high level by recommending an establishment or a mechanism such the Consumer Council or a Body that will not only protect and promote consumer rights and needs in the country but all deals with all consumer issues.

The key stakeholders strongly agree that the national government has to set up a consumer rights body in the country to address the needs and concerns of the general consumers. TRBR is willing to host the event each year because of the passion and need to help safe, protect and promote the rights of telecommunications and broadcasting consumers and not only that, but for the whole consumers at large.