



Remarks of Hardin Ratshisusu, Acting Commissioner of the National Consumer Commission, Mpumalanga festive season consumer awareness campaign launch, White River, Nelspruit, 3 December 2025

Programme Director,

Traditional leaders,

HOD of the Mpumalanga Economic Development and Tourism, Ms Immy Serakalala,

District Director of Ehlanzeni, Mr Peter Maseko,

Members of SAPS,

Regulators and Ombudsmen,

Members of the media,

Distinguished guests,

Sanibonani,

Avuxeni,

Good morning.

It is a privilege for the National Consumer Commission to be here in Mpumalanga to be part of the official launch of the Mpumalanga Festive Season Consumer Awareness Campaign, under the theme – *Spend Wisely. Live Securely. Your Money. Your Future.*

We have come a long way, and next year we mark 15 years of consumer protection in South Africa under the new legal framework, following the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act in 2008 and the subsequent establishment of the National Consumer Commission in 2011.

It is important that we continue with our joint efforts to protect consumers.

Let me thank, in her absence, MEC Ms Jesta Sidell, MEC for the Mpumalanga Department of Economic Development and Tourism, for convening us here in Mpumalanga. We have been collaborating quite well with this department under HOD Ms Immy Serakalala and Chief Director Ms Brenda Mabaso, as we advance our consumer protection efforts.

In fact, early this year, we had remarkably successful events to commemorate World Consumer Rights Day here in Mpumalanga, as the department hosted us at the University of Mpumalanga.

Mpumalanga is indeed a province on the move, from buzzing malls, thriving agriculture, industrial expansion and informal markets to tourism centres, border towns, and transport corridors.

During the festive season, Mpumalanga, like other provinces in the country, experiences increased consumer travel and tourism, high volumes of retail activity, particularly in food, clothing, toys, and electronics, and cross-border and informal trading, which often exposes consumers to unsafe or substandard goods.

This makes awareness of consumer protection especially important during this period, particularly with the rising cost of living.

This campaign, therefore, aims to:

- Empower consumers with knowledge of their rights;
- Encourage businesses in the province to comply fully with the Consumer Protection Act; and
- Prevent unfair, unsafe, and exploitative practices during the festive season.

During the festive period, consumers should particularly be aware of the following practices that fall foul of the Consumer Protection Act, and stay vigilant to avoid being scammed and swindled by unscrupulous suppliers:

- **Deceptive Marketing:** Loud music, Christmas music and the general holiday marketing that might cause consumers to purchase products or services they do not need.

- **Bait Marketing:** Which is when consumers are induced by suppliers who offer them products that are different from the ones marketed or marketing products that are not available, just to lure consumers into their stores. If there is limited stock, this must be disclosed in the advertisement.
- **Implied Warranty of Quality:** For instance, motor vehicles are being sold “**voetstoots**” because they are on special and discounted prices. The Consumer Protection Act prohibits the sale of products “**voetstoots**” unless the defects have been disclosed to the consumer. Consumers need to know that the Consumer Protection Act guarantees a warranty of 6 months on goods and services.
- **Unfair Pricing:** Consumers should be wary of unexplained charges, convenience fees and service particularly when eating out at restaurants. Consumers should not accept price changes at the till and should not be embarrassed to review till slips. More importantly, suppliers must disclose prices and consumers must know that “the price you see is the price you pay.”
- **Bundled goods:** Consumers must be wary of bundled goods that may cost more than the products being sold individually. Sometimes, purported discounts are not applied to the bundle of goods.
- **Labelling:** Consumers need to check the date markings or expiry dates on the products. Products that have not been properly labelled could be unsafe and harmful to the health of consumers.
- **Terms and Conditions:** Consumers should pay attention to the fine print on terms and conditions, particularly clauses that adjust pricing, which is quite common on cell-phone contracts that are heavily discounted and provide for substantial price increases thereafter.

Consumers should be aware that products that are defective can be returned for a refund, replacement or repairs, and Section 56 of the Consumer Protection Act gives consumers the right to elect the appropriate recourse when products fail or are defective.

There is also a rise in scams online. It is therefore important for consumers to verify the legitimacy of suppliers before making purchases online.

It is therefore apt that this campaign will pay particular attention to **Product Safety and Quality, Pricing, Promotions, and Advertising, and Lay-by, Credit, and Over-Indebtedness.**

Consumers are cautioned against unsafe goods, including children's toys not meeting safety standards, expired or poorly labelled food items, and electrical appliances sold without warranty or compliance markings.

Consumers are encouraged to compare prices, be cautious of misleading festive discounts, and ensure that advertised prices match those at the till.

As households prepare for the festive season, consumers are reminded to carefully study credit agreements, avoid unnecessary debt, and know their rights when entering into lay-buy arrangements.

Suppliers operating in White River and Mpumalanga as a whole are reminded that consumer rights apply equally in formal and informal trading environments.

Compliance with the Consumer Protection Act is not optional, it is a must. And for suppliers who do not comply, there shall be consequences.

As we launch this festive season consumer awareness campaign in Mpumalanga, we reaffirm our commitment to **fair and safe markets, continuous consumer education, and effective enforcement** of the Consumer Protection Act.

During this week and the coming weeks, we shall be working closely with provincial authorities, municipalities, enforcement partners, and other law enforcement agencies to ensure compliance throughout the province and the rest of the country.

I call upon:

- Consumers in Mpumalanga to shop responsibly, keep proof of purchase, and speak up when their rights are violated;
- Businesses in the province to trade ethically and lawfully; and
- Traditional leaders, community structures, and the media to partner with us in spreading consumer awareness.

Let us work together to ensure that this festive season is not only joyful, but also fair and safe for all who live, work, and travel through Mpumalanga and throughout the country.

The rights of every consumer must be protected, and we at the National Consumer Commission, together with other regulators and ombudsmen are here to ensure consumers are not robbed of their hard-earned money by rogue suppliers, especially during this festive season.

Consumers, too, have a responsibility and should refrain from the temptation of buying things that are not necessary or simply out of some urge of the festive mood.

However, should consumers experience challenges with suppliers, they should contact the National Consumer Commission through our e-service, website (www.thencc.org.za) or contact centre 012 065 1940.

As the saying goes, “an informed consumer is an empowered consumer.”

Thank you.