

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – APRIL 2022

CONSUMERS WARNED AGAINST ONLINE STORE, SASSY HEELS

The office of the Consumer Goods and Services Ombud (CGSO) today issued a warning to consumers to exercise caution when transacting with Sassy Heels, an online shop selling shoes on social media platforms.

This follows several complaints received by the CGSO against Sassy Heels and lack of cooperation with the office in resolving complaints received against them. From 1 March 2021 to 03 March 2022, the CGSO received a total of 8 cases. The number of complaints received against this supplier seem to be increasing as we received the first two complaints in April 2021 and the rest of the complaints have been received from May 2021, with two having been received this year.

According to complainants Sassy Heels advertises shoes online. Once payment is made, the consumer is provided with an order number. However, the orders are never delivered. Consumers allege that follow up enquiries are not responded to. This lack of response to enquiries is a serious red flag and creates suspicion by the CGSO that there is no intention by Sassy Heels to deliver orders after accepting monies.

When the CGSO was originally dealing with complaints against Sassy Heels, they did not respond to our office. However in two matters, they responded to the CGSO after a long wait. They admitted to have received the complaints and to have subsequently contacted the complainants to resolve the matter without any delays. However later the CGSO learned that there was no attempt to resolve the matter with complainants and delivery was not made. It also seems that Sassy Heels deliberately delayed the complaints resolution process by promising to resolve the complaints but failed to do so.

Taking money from consumers and then failing to deliver the agreed goods and services is contravention of section 19 of the Consumer Protection Act (CPA), which governs suppliers' obligations in terms of the delivery of goods and services and their responsibility in the event they fail to deliver, said Magauta Mphahlele, Ombud of the Consumer Goods and Services sector.

In terms of section 19 of the CPA, suppliers are responsible for delivering goods or services on the agreed date and at the agreed time, or otherwise within a reasonable time after concluding the transaction or agreement. They are further required to deliver at the agreed place of delivery or performance of the services. Where the supplier fails to deliver as agreed and fails to reach an agreement regarding alternative delivery dates and times, the consumer has the right to cancel the transaction without penalty and to receive a full refund.

We urge suppliers to follow the following guidelines when supplying goods or services online :

- Displaying correct pricing. Where there is an error, it must be communicated to consumers and be corrected within a reasonable time, otherwise consumers are entitled to purchase at the displayed price.

- Providing a detailed description of the goods or services to avoid consumers ordering goods that are not fit for purpose.
- Displaying delivery times and communicating delays to consumers.
- Disclosing key terms and conditions, including return and refunds timeframes and channels.
- Displaying contact details and escalation processes if consumers have any queries.
- Avoiding bait marketing or overselling by ensuring that there is sufficient stock or indicating stock limitations in all advertisements where applicable.
- Avoid accepting monies from consumers if there is no stock or capacity to deliver the goods or services at the agreed time and date.
- Disclosing any other additional costs that the consumer would incur, including any delivery costs or cancellation penalties; and
- Providing a system for consumers to track their deliveries.

Consumers can limit the risk of being defrauded by

- Shop with reputable retailers and be wary of unrealistic deals.
- Do due diligence by checking with online communities.
- Exercise caution before transacting with new or unfamiliar e-commerce website

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