

North West Province Takes Firm Stand Against Funeral Industry Exploitation on World Consumer Rights Day.

The Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism, led by MEC Lenkopane, marked World Consumer Rights Day with a strong message against unfair practices within the funeral industry. The colloquium, held at the Chiefs Court in Taung Local Municipality, highlighted the plight of vulnerable consumers, particularly the elderly, who are often exploited by unscrupulous funeral service providers.

MEC Lenkopane, accompanied by Kgosi Tshepo Mankuroane, Bakgatla ba ga Pudukhswana Traditional Council, MMC for LED in Taung Cllr. Tshidi Seepe, Acting Head of Department Mr. Relebohile Mofokane, Local Ward Councillors and representatives from various consumer regulators, emphasised the theme of "Fairness and Transparency in the Funeral Industry."

"The heart of the matter in this year's discussion lies in the dishonouring of funeral policies, or where payments are made after the funeral, which serves no purpose. A practice that robs grieving families of their peace and dignity during their most vulnerable moments," stated MEC Lenkopane. This underscores the core issue driving the department's consumer rights celebration, and the two-day Consumer Education Roadshows, and compliance inspections, which were held, in the Dr. Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District.

The MEC outlined a series of concerning practices, including funeral parlors vanishing when claims are made, offices located far from communities, and aggressive tactics by insurance brokers preying on unsuspecting consumers. "As the government, we are committed to ensuring that our consumers are protected from exploitation. This is why we also strive to further promote the use of the Consumer Court, so that consumers' complaints can be addressed," said the MEC.

To combat these issues, the MEC announced a comprehensive action plan, which includes intensifying awareness campaigns, strengthening enforcement, strengthening complaint mechanisms and verification of funeral undertakers.

The event saw the presence of key consumer regulators in tackling current consumer issues, including ICASA, MIOSA, Sanlam, the Ombud Council, National Financial Ombud Scheme South Africa (NFO), and Taung Local Municipality, signalling a collaborative effort to address the challenges head on.

MEC Lenkopane called upon these regulators to enforce compliance with their requirements, ensure that terms and conditions are clearly stated and explained, particularly to elderly citizens.

The department urges all stakeholders, including funeral undertakers, insurance brokers, underwriters, and community leaders, to join forces in creating a fair and just marketplace. Community members were also encouraged not to hesitate to complain when their consumer rights are violated, and to know where to take their complaints for redress.