

What are your rights as a consumer when it comes to financial products from banks or insurance companies?

(Extracted from Case's web site)

Tips for Consumers:

- 1) **Beware of hype.** Get a second opinion if in doubt. Consumers should also familiarise themselves with the financial products offered on the market to get the best deal for themselves. Elderly consumers should be aware that this is a business transactions and do not sign up just because the teller is nice and helpful.
- 2) **Read the terms and conditions of your agreement carefully.** Though terms and conditions are mostly in fine print, consumers should go through them carefully. If you do not understand, do not sign up on the spot. Ask questions to clarify all doubts.
- 3) **Never focus solely on expected profits.** Consumers should also pay close attention to possible risks and losses.
- 4) **Be informed of methods of dispute resolutions.** Most banks have a Quality Service manager, whom you should contact first in event of a dispute. If the dispute remains unresolved, consumers can approach the Financial Industry Disputes Resolution Centre Ltd (FIDReC) for assistance to resolve their financial disputes. It is an independent and impartial institution specialising in the resolution of disputes between financial institutions and consumers.
- 5) **Contact CASE for assistance.** Consumer requiring assistance can also call the CASE hotline for advice.

Tips for Consumers:

- 1) **Know your rights.** A consumer has the right to contest any adverse assessment of claims. He/she has the right to request for the assessment to be given in writing particularly so when the insurer imposes exclusion or reduction on the claim made.
- 2) **Get professional help.** If consumer is doubtful that the insurer's assessment is fair, he should seek the help of a qualified financial adviser to give a professional view on the matter.
- 3) **Put it down in writing.** When specifying a pre-existing condition, a consumer should make sure that it is put down in writing, and not just acknowledged verbally.
- 4) **Read up on the subject.** The Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) has a consumer education website (www.moneysense.gov.sg) that features articles such

as “Your Guide To Health Insurance”. Most insurance policies come with a 14-day “free look” period for consumers to review the agreement.

- 5) **Investment linked policies require more careful research by consumers.** Consumers should note that investment returns are generally not guaranteed as it fluctuates with the performance of the fund linked to the policy. Consumers should also find out more about the various aspects of the insurance products (benefits and risks, payment of premiums, insurance coverage, whether switching of funds is possible) to ensure that the product is appropriate for their needs. More information can be found at http://www.moneysense.gov.sg/publications/guides_publications/Consumer_Portal_MoneySense_ConsumerGuides.html.
- 6) **Other alternatives.** Besides CASE, consumers can also approach the Financial Industry Disputes Resolution Centre (FIDReC) for Mediation and Adjudication of the dispute.