

17 September 2012

Forum Editor
The Straits Times
stforum@sph.com.sg
Fax: 6319 8289

By fax and email

CASE EMPATHIZES WITH READER, BUT CAN'T ACT AS HIS LAWYER

We genuinely empathize with Mr Lee Kok Kiang's predicament ("Seeking redress at tribunal, Case, police gets customer nowhere", Sep 12).

We had received about 78 complaints against Excellence Home Gallery. Hence, CASE issued an alert to warn consumers about this company on 6 August 2012.

For those already caught in the bind, the only course of redress is to file a claim with the Small Claims Tribunals (SCT) to claim a refund of monies paid to the company. If a business ignores the SCT order to repay the consumer, the consumer can apply to the subcourt bailiff's section to enforce the Order by seizing the company's assets and selling them for repayment of their claim. This is a legal process that the consumers are able to carry out on their own. While Case can advise these consumers on what they can do, we are unable to represent them in the SCT.

Some industry associations have actively supported or implemented measures that protect consumers such as insuring consumers' deposits. An example would be Casetrust-accredited spa companies which have introduced insurance schemes to protect prepayments since October 2011. The Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) (Motor Vehicle Dealer Deposits) Regulations implemented since 2009 will also ensure some protection towards deposits placed in the purchase of motor vehicles.

We hope that the association/council in the furniture industry will put in place measures to prevent occurrences of such incidents in future. Consumers are advised to place a minimal deposit for delivery at a later or future date when making purchases.

Lim Biow Chuan
President
CASE