



# Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

## Office of the Attorney General

Edward Manibusan, Attorney General  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Hon. Juan A. Sablan Memorial Bldg.  
Caller Box 10007, Capitol Hill  
Saipan, MP 96950

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**For Immediate Release**

**Contact: Carla Torres**  
**237-7500**  
**carla\_torres@cnmioag.org**

### **FORMER CHIEF PROSECUTOR BECOMES NEW CONSUMER COUNSEL FOR OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**

**Office of the Attorney General, Saipan** – After having served the past two years as Chief Prosecutor for the Criminal Division, Michele Harris has recently been appointed by Attorney General Manibusan to serve as Consumer Counsel for the OAG. In addition to her many years of prosecution, Harris also has experience in civil litigation and insurance defense which will enable her to effectively oversee consumer investigations and hold violators accountable.

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General investigates and enforces violations of the Consumer Protection Act. The office was reinstated in 2015, following Typhoon Soudelor, to combat complaints of price gouging and the sale of defective items. Most recently, the Division issued a price freeze for the Commonwealth to prevent similar issues following Typhoon Yutu.

The OAG strives to build in the market an environment of safe, fair and sustainable consumption where unfair, deceptive and fraudulent businesses are held accountable for their attempts to take advantage of consumers, especially following natural disasters. To ensure this mission, Harris intends to re-establish the Joint Consumer Protection Task Force, provide community education and outreach, and monitor retail establishments to ensure compliance with the Consumer Protection Act.

By monitoring market place behaviors and identifying issues of concern to consumers, the Attorney General hopes to encourage responsible trade practices and fair competition that will protect the health, safety, and economic security of the consumer, thereby leading to lower prices and better consumer choices.

On taking on this new position, Harris said, “I am honored to continue to serve the people of the CNMI and look forward to the challenges of this new position.” Harris is replaced by long term prosecutor and local attorney, Heather Barcinas, who is currently serving as Acting Chief Prosecutor.

If you would like to file a consumer complaint, please contact the Office of the Attorney General at 237-7500 or email [consumer\\_counsel@cnmioag.org](mailto:consumer_counsel@cnmioag.org). Complaint forms can also be filled out in person at the Capitol Hill office.

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