



DISCOVER *Parliament*

How Can I Participate in the Work of Parliament?

Why should I take part?

Imagine what it would be like if Fiji had no Parliament. Imagine if there were no elections (or if elections were not conducted fairly), if tax money was not accounted for and disappeared, and if people were afraid to say what they thought because of what the supporters of those in power might do to them.

Sadly, many people live in countries like that. And many fight and die for the democratic rights that we now take for granted: the right to elect our own representatives in Parliament, the right to have a Government that is accountable for its lawmaking and spending, the right to change the Government, and the right to talk about our political views without fear of going to prison.

To keep a democracy healthy, it's important that its citizens take part in it. Those who have democratic rights have a responsibility to take an interest, be informed, and have a say. You don't have to wait until you are a voter. You can start thinking now about how the decisions being made in Parliament or by your local council or local rural authority will shape your future.



Women's Parliament, 2016 - a community engagement initiative of Parliament - practice parliament



How can I take part?

Parliament makes decisions on our behalf and its members are democratically elected. At any age, you can start to become involved in what happens in Parliament and your community. Even before you can vote, there are lots of ways you can be part of the process.

How can young people who can't vote take part?

If you are too young to vote, you can still take part in what happens in your community. Why not start by finding out who some members of Parliament (MPs) are and what they are doing in your community?

- Read newspapers so that you are informed about issues in your community and about what is happening in Parliament and at your community or village.
- Watch the news and listen to the radio to find out how issues are being presented.
- Discuss issues with members of your family/community and find out what they think.
- Discuss issues with friends, trying to raise their awareness of the facts and what the impacts of proposed changes might be. You could even organise a meeting in your community to raise awareness of an issue.
- Contact the media or write a letter to the editor of a newspaper to express your opinion
- Find out what action you can take if you feel strongly about an issue.
- Follow Parliament social media: Facebook, Twitter, Youtube

Being informed, having an opinion, and taking part are important ways of understanding what decisions are being made on your behalf. **Start now!**

Contact a member of Parliament

Many of the decisions that your representatives in Parliament make will affect your life and your family's life. So, if you have an opinion about an issue under discussion in Parliament, let an MP know what you think and why. For example, you may think that a particular Bill is unfair or that more consideration should be given to issues that affect young people.

Anyone can contact an MP to ask a question or to let the member know what he or she thinks about matters that are being discussed in Parliament.

To find out more, go to www.parliament.gov.fj
Members want to hear from people they represent. That's how they know whether they're making the right decisions.

Make a submission

Anyone of any age can make a submission to a Standing Committee. If you feel strongly about a Bill that is under discussion, write to the committee and tell them what you think! You don't have to know everything about the Bill, but you do need to do some preparation so you can clearly explain the changes that you think are needed. You can even be invited to go to the committee in person to tell them what you think (make an "oral submission").



Standing committee during a public consultation

Petition Parliament

If you feel you want to take more direct action about an issue that is affecting you, your family, or your community, you can organise a petition or sign someone else's.

A petition is a request for Parliament to change a law, investigate an issue, or change how it deals with an issue. It can be signed by one person or lots of people. An MP presents the petition to Parliament, where a Standing Committee considers it. The committee then reports to Parliament, recommending what response (if any) the Government should make.

Before signing a petition, make sure you know what it is about and that you agree with what it is asking!

There are strict rules about how petitions should be set out. For more information, go to www.parliament.gov.fj

THAT'S INTERESTING

Parliament also occasionally organises a Youth Parliament where young Fijians can learn more about Parliament and participate in organised debates. You can apply! Visit the parliament web site for more information: www.parliament.gov.fj



A community engagement initiative of Parliament - practice parliament

THAT'S INTERESTING

Any member of the public can ask (petition) Parliament to take action on an area of public or personal concern. A Parliament discusses the petition and if approved, it then forwards the petition to the appropriate Standing Committee. The committee investigates the concern and if it thinks that parliamentary action is required, it makes recommendations to the House. The Government must respond to a report on a petition.

Voting

Every four years, we get to vote for our representatives in Parliament. Once you are 18 years of age, you can vote as long as you are a Fijian citizen.

Your first step is to register which means asking for your name to be added to the electoral roll. Next, find out as much as you can about the parties and candidates who are standing for election. You can learn more about them from newspapers, radio, the Internet, and television. Find out what they say they will do if they are elected.



Preparing for Student Parliament, 2014

DID YOU KNOW ?

The 'Parliament Discovery Centre' is our 'Parliament Experience' flagship. This is a dedicated exhibition space at Parliament, which includes exhibits and digital displays to inform the community about the history, people, procedures and work of the Parliament. The discovery centre is linked to tours and events programme. The communities are encouraged to visit Parliament and listen to deliberations during Parliament sitting days or find out about the tours and events programme.

DID YOU KNOW ?

Learning about Parliament can be interesting and fun. The Parliament of the Republic of Fiji develops education programmes and resources for students, teachers and the public at large.

'Our SaY' (SaY - Student and Youth) is our education and youth engagement flagship. It is a comprehensive education project targeted to students and youth. It is designed around four stages of learning development as students' progress through primary and secondary education and on to tertiary education and the workplace. 'Our SaY' includes resources for teaching of Parliament, professional development for teachers, school based education programs such as role plays, practice parliaments and youth networking activities centred around parliament. Our SaY encourages students and youth to be active participants in our democracy.



Discussion and activities

1. Develop your own quiz

Develop 10 questions based on the information in this card.

For example: Why is it important to know what happens in Parliament and my community?

- Make sure that the answers can be found in this card.
- Swap your quiz with a classmate and take turns to answer each other's questions.

2. Building understanding of the vocabulary and concepts

- Choose 10 words or phrases from the list below and write each one on a card:

enrol

member of Parliament

democratic rights

letter to the editor

electoral roll

referendum

submission

petition

representatives

eligible to vote

accountable

standing committee

citizen

opinion

- On another set of 10 cards, write definitions for each word.
- Swap your sets of cards with a classmate and match their words with their definitions.

3. Try This

With a classmate or small group, brainstorm local issues that affect you, your school, or your community. Select one of these issues to investigate further.

Find out as much as you can about the issue, for example, who it affects, why it is a problem, and what you think might be a solution.

Discuss how you could tell a member of Parliament or local council/rural authority about your views. Would it be best to write a letter, send an email, or go in person? Should you write a submission or put together a petition? For each possible approach, fill out a "pros and cons" chart, then decide which approach would be best and why.

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