
RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTION 147 /2020

Hon. Mitieli Bulanauca to ask the Minister for Infrastructure, Meteorological Services, Lands and Mineral Resources – **Can the Minister update Parliament on the Land Buy Back Scheme in particular:**

- a) the number of applications received;**
 - b) the number of applications approved per annum;**
 - c) the quantum of payment for each buy back per annum; and**
 - d) the current status of each successful applicant,**
- from 2018 to date.**

The **Buy Back Scheme was established in 1989** with the intention or objective to assist the native land owners who had little or no cultivable agricultural land in buying back ancestral land alienated as freehold lands. ***The first freehold-buy back was approved by cabinet on the 3rd of October, 1989 for:***

- 1) *Munia Island in Vanua Vanuabalavu;*
- 2) *Tuvumaca, Nasuva-Weilagi, Taveuni;*
- 3) *Matakunea, Navatu, Cakaudrove;*
- 4) *Korodogo, Mat.Naduru, Dogotuki, Macuata; and*
- 5) *Mua Estate, Yavusa Wainikeli, Naselesele, Taveuni.*

On the 20th of April, 1993 Cabinet approved a \$2million budget for the Freehold Buy Back initiative.

11 leases and contributed directly to the reduction of debts by 8.17% for the past 5-8years.

c) *the current status for each successful applicant from 2018 to date with the quantum of payment:*

From **2018 to-date, Yavusa Vugalei of Kasavu** village, Naitasiri have cleared their dues to make them the fourth landowning unit to have successfully cleared their Freehold buy-back scheme re-payment.

The successful landowning units under this initiative are:

- 1) Yavusa Waivunia/Cakaudrove - \$224,250 [345 acres];
- 2) Yavusa Waidau/Levuka -\$166,620.80 [473 acres];
- 3) Yavusa Nasuva/Taveuni -\$317,900 [1,564 acres]; and
- 4) Yavusa Vugalei/Naitasiri -\$148,000 [74 acres].

It is significant to note that out of the total landowning units assisted by government, 4 have successfully cleared their dues amounting to \$806,770.80 which contributes 18.3% of the total amount recovered.

However, apart from the successful applicants the Ministry has rendered assistance to the landowning units such as:

- (i) Assisting landowning units for their Buy-Back Re-Payment through: -
 - a) re-definition of boundaries for the four buy-back land paid-off;
 - b) landuse feasibility report on potential developments/events for these 4 parcels; and
 - c) on-going consultations and assistance rendered for the transfer of titles without any cost.

(ii) Assistance rendered to defaulting landowning units: -

- a) leasing of 11 freehold buyback land for landowning units to assist payment defaults;
- b) for un-serviced accounts, on-going consultations and active marketing to lease land to assist LOU with payments;
- c) monitoring and consistent follow-ups on payment updates by the Ministry scheduled on a monthly basis; and
- d) for areas occupied by informal settlements [Naveria], on-going consultations made with landowning units for the regularization of lease and payment of premium to clear landowning units arrears and receive consistent revenue through payment of ground rentals with the issuance of 50 year leases.

Three (3) freehold titles have been successfully handed over to the landowners namely [**Tuvumaca, Weilagi / Yavusa Wairuku, Waivunia and Yavusa Waidau, Ovalau**] whilst 1 is in the process of title transfer and handover to **Yavusa Vugalei, Naitasiri**.