



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, HERITAGE AND ARTS

RESPONSE TO THE WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION BY THE HON. MIKAELE LEAWARE

Parliament
GOVERNMENT BUILDING

Thursday May 2021
Question 117/2021

Can the Minister update Parliament on the transport subsidy and how many schools have been assisted through this subsidy, by Division.

I take this opportunity to respond to the written question posted by the Hon. Leaware on the transport subsidy and how many schools have been assisted through this subsidy by Division.

Response

This initiative was introduced by the Government to enable students to gain access and equity to quality educational facilities within their home zone schools. This initiative is aligned to the Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Quality Education and to the National Development Plan 3.1.5 “*Quality Education for All*” that is to *Ensure every Fijian Student has equal access to education at all levels. This focus on education supports the development of a knowledge-based society that will result in positive ripples throughout the economy through improvements in efficiency and productivity, the rate of diffusion and adoption of technology, and research and innovation.*

The Ministry’s travel assistance programme is for students from low-income families which started in 2009 with the Bus Fare Assistance Scheme.

The Ministry, in 2010, made provisions to extend the transport assistance scheme to students that used other modes of transportation. Children were provided with transport vouchers which included bus services and rural service license (RSL – mini vans, carriers, trucks and boats).

In order to make education equitable for students in the remote interiors and maritime areas, the Ministry since 2014 has assisted a total of 123 schools and 46,846 students through the boat and outboard assistance. Breakdown of the 123 schools according to the four Divisions is provided in the table below.

Boat Assistance Since 2014	
Division	No. of Schools
Eastern	67
Northern	25
Central	13
Western	18
Total	123

With the introduction of cashless payments in the bus industry, bus coupons were replaced by E-ticketing cards in the financial year 2017/2018. The RSL voucher distribution has since continued for students that use other modes of transportation.

The E-ticketing system came into place in the financial year 2017/2018 and the standard recording of the transport assistance program per school calendar is available from 2018. The table summarizes the transport assistance provided to the schools by schooling year, geographical divisions and the number of students assisted by assistance types (E-ticketing and RSL Vouchers).

Year	Division	No of Schools	E-ticketing	RSL Vouchers
2018	Central	509	19,350	8,122
	Eastern	246	-	3,208
	Northern	396	11,223	8,807
	Western	615	26,155	8,154
2019	Central	514	27,326	10,667
	Eastern	242	-	4,330
	Northern	406	12,302	9,034
	Western	615	32,051	9,188
2020	Central	513	21,685	10,192
	Eastern	242	-	4,235
	Northern	406	11,483	8,370
	Western	621	27,617	8,580
2021 - Term 1	Central	514	15,377	10,034
	Eastern	242	-	2,706
	Northern	406	8,249	6,441
	Western	623	24,542	9,524

As tabulated above, the Ministry continues to provide assistance to students in the current schooling year with approximately 77,000 students assisted in Term 1. Since 2017, the Fijian Government has made significant investments in assisting students with transport.

The table below provides Transport Assistance allocation and usage.

Description	2017-2018		2018-2019		Covid 19 Supplementary Budget 2019-2020		2020- 2021
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget
Transport Assistance	\$ 20,000,000.00	\$27,620,274.68	\$ 25,000,000.00	\$ 29,468,768.08	\$ 20,000,000.00	\$ 15,177,878.20	\$ 21,440,800.00

Yours sincerely

Hon. Rosy Akbar
Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts