



# PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI

---

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

### REPORT ON ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE FIJI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, 2017



Parliamentary Paper No. 06 of 2019

*April 2019*

*Published and Printed by the Department of Legislature, Parliament House, SUVA*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAIR’S FOREWORD .....	3
LIST OF ACRONYMS .....	4
RECOMMENDATION .....	5
INTRODUCTION .....	5
Committee Members .....	5
PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES OF THE FIJI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY .....	6
ISSUES RAISED .....	6
Retention of Expatriate Staff.....	6
Recommendation.....	6
Residential Student Accommodation.....	6-7
Recommendation.....	7
Financial Sustainability.....	7
Recommendation.....	7
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS .....	8-9
GENDER ANALYSIS .....	9
CONCLUSION.....	10
COMMITTEE MEMBERS’ SIGNATURE.....	11
APPENDICES	
Witnesses .....	12
Published Written Evidence .....	13

## CHAIR'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the report of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on the annual review of the Fiji National University for the year ended 31 December 2017.

This review was made on the 2017 Annual Report of the Fiji National University and was done in accordance with Standing Order 109(2)(b) which mandates the committee to look into issues related to health, education, social services, labour, culture and media.

The review looked at nine key areas covering the period from January to December 2017, conducted into: Fiji National University's administration; structure; budgetary allocation; programmes offered; policies; challenges; highlights; priorities for the coming years; and its implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

One of the key activities of the Fiji National University in 2017 was the comprehensive Academic Portfolio Review which was carried out to assess the quality of its undergraduate programmes in both technical and vocation education and training (TVET) and in higher education. This exercise subsequently led to the reorganisation of the University's curriculum. The committee looks forward to the University completing its installation of the new University Management Information System which will allow similar Academic Portfolio Reviews to be run for all programmes on an annual basis.

The Committee is generally satisfied with the operations of the Fiji National University and notes the remarkable positive changes made in 2017. In particular, we commend the University for its commitment to supporting the TVET sector and its recognition for professions such as, carpentry, construction, plumbing and electrical engineering which continue to be crucial to sustaining Fiji's continued economic development.

Finally, I thank the Vice Chancellor and his staff for their assistance in this inquiry. I also wish to thank my Committee colleagues and Committee staff for their contributions and support.

I commend this report to Parliament.



---

**Hon. Viam Pillay**  
**Chairman**

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

FNU	-	Fiji National University
NCDs	-	Non-Communicable Diseases
PhD	-	Doctor of Philosophy
SDGs	-	Sustainable Development Goals
TVET	-	Technical and Vocation Education and Training
TELS	-	Tertiary Education Loans Scheme

## RECOMMENDATION:

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs has conducted a review of the Annual Report of the Fiji National University for 2017 and recommends that Parliament takes note of its report.

## INTRODUCTION

The 2017 Annual Report of the Fiji National University was tabled in Parliament during the November 2018 meeting and referred to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, for its scrutiny.

Standing Orders 109(2)(b) allows Standing Committee on Social Affairs to examine matters related to health, education, social services, labour, culture and media.

Standing Orders 110(1)(c) authorises the Standing Committee to *scrutinise the government departments with responsibility within the committee's subject area, including by investigating, inquiring into, and making recommendations relating to any aspect of such a department's administration, legislation or proposed legislative program, budget, rationalisation, restructuring, functioning, organisation, structure and policy formulation.*

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The substantive members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs are:

- Hon. Viam Pillay (Chairperson)
- Hon. George Vegenathan (Deputy Chairperson)
- Hon. Alipate Nagata (Member)
- Hon. Salote Radrodoro (Member)
- Hon. Dr Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu (Member)

During the Standing Committee's meetings, the following alternate membership arose pursuant to Standing Order 115(5):

- Hon. Simione Rasova
- Hon. Mikaele Leawere



# **PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES OF THE FIJI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

The principal activities of the Fiji National University are the provision of post-secondary programmes of study in higher education, technical, vocational education and training that are responsive to the needs of industry, the market place and non-formal sector of employment to students from Fiji and other countries in the South Pacific region. In addition, the University undertakes applied research which addresses societal needs in Fiji.

## **ISSUES RAISED**

### **RETENTION OF EXPATRIATE STAFF**

The University has around 100 expatriate staff who make up close to 10 percent of its workforce. However, retaining these staff is a challenge as they are on three-year contracts. Under the current Immigration legislation, the University only makes three-year appointments and is required to advertise the position of an expatriate member of staff midway through his/her third year, to ensure that there is not a local candidate who is as at least as well qualified. As a consequence, some expatriate staff begin looking for a new job overseas as they complete their second year due to the uncertainty on renewal of their contracts. The committee notes that this has been very disruptive to teaching and research.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the Fiji National University must be more vigilant to the visa arrangement requirements with the Department of Immigration in regard to the retention of expatriate staff if the positions cannot be filled locally.

### **RESIDENTIAL STUDENT ACCOMMODATION**

The committee noted that only 10 per cent of the students enrolled at the University can be accommodated at the student residential hostels. To curb this problem, the University is progressively upgrading all of its halls of residence and hostels.

The University also has available land and is in the process of planning where additional hostels can be built. To this end, the University is exploring the prospect of having Public Private Partnerships with Investment Fiji and Fiji Development Bank. In addition, the University has created a Campus Master Plan which has set aside zoned spaces for future hostel development in the Nasinu, Pasifika, Tamavua, Natabua, and Labasa campuses.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the Fiji National University vigorously pursue its Public Private Partnerships with other stakeholders to implement its Campus Master Plan.

## **FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

The committee noted that the University has not reviewed its tuition fees for some years. The consequence is that it is increasingly dependent on the operating grant received from Government.

During the evidence session with the Vice-Chancellor of the University, the committee was informed that there is a possibility for a tuition fee review in the future. However, the challenge is to conduct the review sensitively as students are funding their fees through loans taken from TELS and privately.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the Fiji National University pursue other income streams and investment opportunities to cushion the impact of the tuition fee review so that there is minimum impact on students.



## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The committee noted that FNU aligns itself to the following SDGs:

SDG	FNU alignment
2. No Hunger	College of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forests: Focus on food security; seed banks
3. Good health and well-being	One of the University's core themes is combatting NCDs.
4. Quality education	Core business of learning & teaching
5. Gender equality	Core value of the University.
7. Affordable and clean energy	College of Engineering, Science & Technology: Focus on renewable energy. There is a huge scope to expand solar and FNU is investing in developing its capacity to lead training for the solar industry in terms of installation and maintenance.
8. Decent work and economic growth	FNU aligns its programmes with current and future employment to ensure graduate employability. All of the programmes are designed with employers, have work-based attachments and regular surveys are conducted on graduates' employment.
13. Climate action	Central Research theme, Interdisciplinary Masters Degree in Climate Change Adaptation.



#### 17. Partnerships for the goals

International partnerships with universities in Australia and New Zealand, Association of Commonwealth Universities, Caribbean universities, and those in the Asia-Pacific.

## GENDER ANALYSIS

Gender is a critical dimension to parliamentary scrutiny. Standing Order 110 (2) requires committees to consider gender equality and ensure that the impact on both men and women is explored in all matters.

The committee noted that the University's Human Resource policies are in line with the 2013 Constitution and non-discriminatory. The University also has in place a well-developed staff development policy to provide both male and female employees with equal opportunities to upgrade their skills and qualifications. Furthermore, FNU has a programme in place to promote women in leadership which is funded by the Association of Commonwealth Universities. The committee was also pleased to note that gender balance is monitored at different levels in University.

## **CONCLUSION**

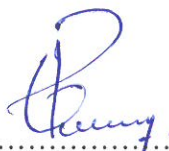
The Standing Committee on Social Affairs noted that the Fiji National University is the country's only comprehensive, government-funded university. It is a dual sector university, committed to both TVET and higher education, with the goal of underpinning Fiji's economic and social development by providing a highly-skilled labour force.

The review of the Fiji National University's 2017 Annual Report was conducted in a very tactful and comprehensive manner. After the review the committee forwarded questions to the University on certain issues for further clarification.

This has enabled the committee for Social Affairs to submit to Parliament a more reliable and a cohesive report.

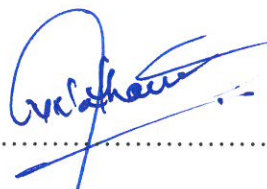
## COMMITTEE MEMBERS' SIGNATURE

We, the Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, hereby agree with the contents of this report:



Hon. Viam Pillay

(Chairperson)



Hon. George Vegnathan

(Deputy Chairperson)



Hon. Alipate Nagata

(Member)



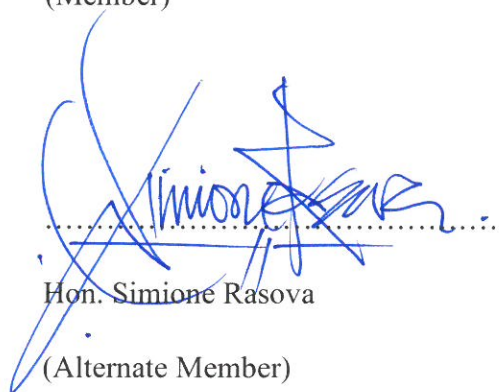
Hon. Salote Radrodro

(Member)



Hon. Dr. Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu

(Member)



Hon. Simione Rasova

(Alternate Member)



Hon. Mikaele Leawere

(Alternate Member)



## APPENDICES

### Witnesses

---

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the Parliament website at the following link: <http://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-social-affairs/>

**Thursday 31 January 2019**

Fiji National University

**Professor Nigel Healey**, Vice Chancellor.

## **Published written evidence**

---

Written evidence and supplementary information was received from the Fiji National University and can be viewed on the Parliament website at the following link:  
<http://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-social-affairs/>