

APPENDICES

Appendix One

Written Response by National Fire Authority



NFA
NATIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY
FIJI ISLANDS

Always Ready

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13 July 2020

Honourable Viam Pillay
Chairperson, Social Affairs Committee
Parliament of Fiji
PO Box 2352
Government Buildings
SUVA

Dear Sir

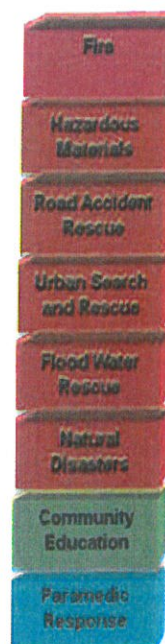
RE: CLARIFICATION OF ISSUES – NATIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY 2013 ANNUAL REPORT

1. Brief the Committee on the functions of the National Fire Authority

The National Fire Authority's core function has expanded beyond fire response and rescue to provide a broader **emergency management service** as illustrated:

Fire Response – relates to responding to any fire emergency call made either to NFA's 910 emergency line or landline or to any of NFA's 15 fire stations (in operation in 2013) located as follows:

Division	Station Locations
Central/Eastern (6)	Suva, Valelevu, Nausori, Levuka, Navua and Pacific Harbor.
Western (6)	Lautoka, Nadi, Sigatoka, Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki.
Northern (3)	Labasa, Savusavu, Taveuni



Hazardous Material Rescue - NFA responds to incidents relating to hazardous material which mainly involve attendance to oil and fuel spillages, chemical spills, toxic material and gas leakages.

Road Accident Rescue - NFA's role in this emergency operation is to effectively provide lifesaving support to trapped and injured persons and subsequently their extrication from the vehicle, provide first aid treatment on the victims before rushing the injured to the nearest medical centre or hospital. NFA's fire fighters have been trained and possess the required knowledge of a systematic approach to road accident rescue, basic first aid, other agency roles and resources, the importance of scene integrity, the basic construction of motor vehicles, use of relevant equipment, applying the techniques employed to effect extrication, critical incident stress and the importance of effective operational and emotional debriefing.

Urban Search and Rescue - During the year there were no incidents relating to urban search and rescue (USAR) operations. This operation involves the location, rescue (extrication), and initial medical stabilization of victims trapped in confined spaces. Structural collapse is most often the cause of victims being trapped, but victims may also be trapped in transportation accidents such as elevators, etc. USAR operations have also involved pet rescue incidents involving the rescue of pets that have either fallen off a cliff or trapped in a tree.

Flood & Swift Water Rescue - Many areas in Fiji are susceptible to flooding and have required response and recovery efforts by NFA and other agencies. Flood water response and evacuation

efforts have usually followed natural disasters. NFA's role in these operations have gradually gained acceptance and dependence by members of the community as the role of the firefighters in these operations relate to the ferrying of people across a flooded river or flooded land, evacuation or moving of people or animals to safety, search and recovery—searching floodwaters for missing people and rescuing people trapped by floodwaters, such as from their homes, roof tops, car roofs, house roofs or on trees.

These rescue operations are often carried out during poor weather conditions where flooded waters have been known to carry rubbish and debris that can flow with great force and pose much danger for our firefighters. In most cases, fire crews have to work at night to meet the demands of the communities.

Natural Disaster Response - Emergencies during natural disasters or any other emergency that requires the use of outboard engine vessels are also attended to by NFA. Special services relating to clearing out of fallen trees and debris from roads has also been provided by NFA's firefighters, particularly after natural disasters such as cyclones or heavy flooding. Good coordination between the National Disaster Management Office is essential in this multi-agency operation. Municipalities, businesses, hospitals and schools have usually engaged the services of the NFA to assist in the clearing up of debris and silt for quick return of the community to normalcy.

Community Education – Involves our firefighters conducting community awareness programs either to residential communities or schools or during roadshows. House to house visitations are also effective modes of educating home owners on the fire safety awareness, safe placement of flammable material, developing a fire evacuation plan and common fire safety tips.

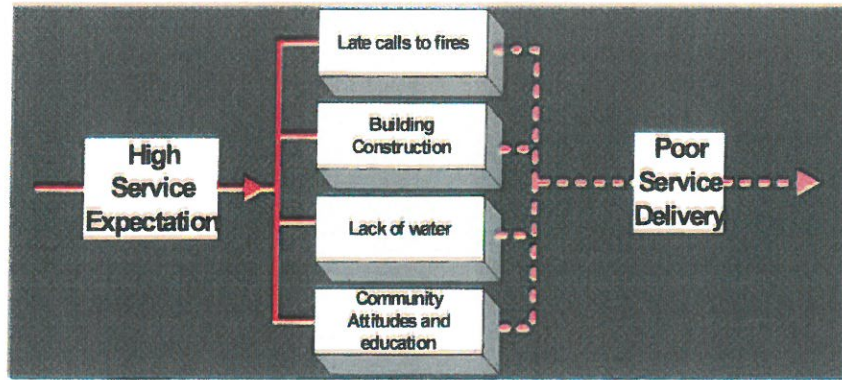
Paramedic Response – Ministry of Health continued to outsource its Emergency Ambulance Service (EAS) to the NFA during the year. NFA's emergency ambulance service provides non-emergency basic life support, advanced life support and ensures that a nurse or respiratory therapist staff accompanies any patient during critical-care transportation services.

2. *Inform the Committee on the key challenges NFA faces whilst trying to achieve its strategic objectives and how it is planning to overcome these challenges.*

In 2013, NFA rolled out its new Strategic Plan 2013 to 2018 and outlined the following key challenges:

- Recognition of NFA's current financial limitations and the need to look for new funding opportunities as well as strengthen current income streams.
- NFA becoming a "National" fire service – serving all of Fiji rather than only serving within the fire boundaries of our cities and towns.
- NFA mainstreaming and integrating with other agencies and stakeholders to deliver fire safety programs and mitigate fires.
- NFA continuously improving to be the modern fire service our community expects.

The Strategic Plan also identified external issues or roadblocks that continued to impact NFA's performance and ability to effectively contain, control and mitigate the effects of fire and these main roadblocks are illustrated below:



Six key strategic elements were identified as the priority areas to drive the addressing of these key challenges that continued to hinder the effective delivery and sustainability of NFA's operations and these are outlined as follows:

- 1: Strengthening of NFA capacity and service delivery
- 2: Community education, marketing and engagement
- 3: Fire service performance monitoring and reporting
- 4: Partnerships and strong stakeholder relationships
- 5: Appropriate legislative and policy framework
- 6: Appropriate and sustainable NFA funding arrangements - Stringent financial management, audit of the books of insurance companies and reviewing and strengthening of the fire compliance inspections

There were a lot of difficulties encountered in the implementation of the Action Plans as a result of financial difficulties and the limited resources available to NFA.

Another major drawback was the availability of skilled and competent human resource capacity to drive and ensure achievements of the key performance indicators that support the implementation of the above strategies.

3. How does NFA ensure that both male and female employees are treated equally in recruitment, training, hiring and promotion?

In 2008 and 2009, we started recruiting Female Firefighters in line with our HR Policy and Procedures under HR 13.0 on Equal Employment Opportunities and also with the ERA Act. In 2013, we had 10 female corporate services staff and 8 female firefighters, total of 18 Females in the workforce.

In terms of training and promotion, all our female firefighters are provided the same training as that provided to the male firefighters. Promotions are determined through internal assessments, courses and examinations and will only apply if they have successfully completed the prescribed requirements for their respective rank.

4. Provide the Committee with the sex disaggregated data on all positions held in the NFA in 2013 and the percentage of women who were in managerial positions.

Departments	Female Managers	Females	Males	Total
Corporate Services	1	9	10	20
Female Firefighters	-	8	-	8
Male Firefighters	-	-	281	281
Total Number of Employees	18		291	301

5. Does NFA align itself to any of the Sustainable Development Goals? If so, can you further enlighten the Committee on this?

Fiji's National Development Plan (NDP) incorporates the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The NDP requires the National Fire Authority to contribute the following:

- i) NDP Goal 3.2.1 - Modernising Land Transport – Access to transportation through an efficient and sustainable transport network and the need to ensure safe, efficient (including reducing traffic congestion), and affordable transportation services, the National Fire Authority is required to improve the post-accident emergency response time by:
 - a) Extending areas served from Suva to another 11 areas namely: Navua, Deuba, Sigatoka, Ba, Rakiraki, Korovou, Nadi, Lautoka, Savusavu, Labasa and Taveuni;
 - b) Procure complementary rapid assessment and response (RAR) kits, communication and data entry equipment; and
 - c) Reduce response times in the areas served from 10 to 5 minutes.

NFA currently provides ambulance services in Suva, Nausori, Korovou, Korolevu, Sigatoka, Nadi, Ba, Labasa, Seaqaqa and Savusavu. Expansion of these services are reliant on Government assistance for the provision of Capital grants for the procurement of new Ambulance vehicles and Operating grant for the provision of ambulance services for the public. Whilst the procurement of Ambulance equipment is included in the Operating grant provision by Government, NFA also procures the necessary equipment and provides the necessary basic training for our personnel to effectively carry out their role. NFA has also commenced analysis of its current operational areas of service around the country so that its response time is reduced from 10 to 5 minutes. This is a major exercise and it will also impact the operational effectiveness of NFA's fire service provision.

- ii) NDP Goal 3.2.9 – Sustainable Cities and Towns – Creating vibrant and environmentally sustainable urban centres, the National Fire Authority is required to contribute to new Growth Centres in Navua, Korovou, Nabouwalu, Keiyasi, Vunidawa and Seaqaqa.

NFA has established permanent Fire Stations in Korovou, Nabouwalu and Seaqaqa. Whilst NFA has a Fire Station presence in Navua, it has secured land in Navua for a permanent establishment to be constructed. NFA has also identified suitable land in Keiyasi and Vunidawa and is currently in the process of securing these properties. Establishment of new Fire Stations in these areas will need NFA to seek funding assistance from Government.

Also, in March 2018 the National Fire Authority engaged the services of Consultants – *Pricewaterhouse Coopers* to develop and write up NFA's new Strategic Plan for the next five years. Consultations involved key Stakeholder and Staff workshops and including the incorporation of the 5-year and 20-year NDP and SDG into the new Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

6. Update the Committee on NFA's future plans and initiatives?

The NFA's plans and initiatives for the five (5) years from 2020 to 2025 have been incorporated into its new Strategic Plan which sets out its new Corporate **Vision: Resilient communities with effective Emergency Services**. To achieve this Vision, four (4) Strategic Goals have been identified and these are outlined below together with the plans and initiatives expected to be achieved for the realization of NFA's Vision:

Strategic Goal 1 - Safety and Prevention

- Review of NFA legislations and development of new regulations
- Develop concept and framework for integrated community approach
- Implementation of 910 digitization project

- Develop and implement Competency and Capability Framework
- Stocktake of all fire hydrants and improve volumetric flowrate to 1000L/min
- Vehicle and firefighting equipment replacement plan
- Develop contingency plans for recovery assistance
- Develop and implement compliance and enforcement strategies for inspections

Strategic Goal 2 - Exceptional Fire and Emergency Services

- Develop cyclic maintenance plan for NFA assets
- Review strategic operations response plan
- Review emergency safety promotions plan
- Introduction and implementation of ISO Standards
- Develop National Fire Safety Standards
- Introduce tech initiatives such as aerial drones, walkie talkies
- Develop emergency ambulance policy
- Strengthen stakeholder relations
- Establish new Research & Development Unit

Strategic Goal 3 - NFA Sustainability

- Skill gaps analysis
- Strengthen legal and ICT units
- Review organization structure
- Establish new Regulatory Unit
- Develop standard criteria for establishment of new Fire Stations based on risk and population growth
- Review and introduce new Revenue streams
- Timely submission of Audited financial statements
- Upgrade ICT infrastructure
- Concept designs for Fire Academy, Control Center, Walu Bay, NFA HQ

Strategic Goal 4 - People Strategy

- Wellness program for all staff
- Review Risk Management policy and Top 20 Risks
- Advance high skill training for staff
- Implement Competency and Capability framework
- Review and update all training manuals
- Develop individual work plans for all staff and implement performance management system.
- Implement recognition and rewards framework.

These plans and initiatives have been incorporated into Annual Costed Operating Plans and progress will be monitored on a quarterly basis as well as through Individual Work Plans to ensure achievement of all targets every year and all efforts and activities are measured appropriately.

7. *Explain why there has been a lapse in reporting on NFA's operations from 2014 to 2019 and by when the Authority intends to submit its pending Annual Reports to the line Minister.*

- In 2014, the Authority managed to produce the 2009 Annual Accounts for audit. We had since worked on the audit of accounts since then until now.
- There were challenges faced in completing the accounts where the Authority needed to adopt IFRS in its Financial Statement Reporting. Though it was a new adoption for NFA, the Authority had to look at upgrading its Accounting Software in 2010 which was eventually implemented in 2016.
- Another challenging factor was the limitations of the software (Peachtree) that was used back in 2009 to 2015. Based on the limitation, the Accountant had to do majority of the compilations manually.

- From 2014 to 2019 the Authority was able to complete audit of accounts for 2009 to 2014.
- Staff turnover was another challenging factor where records could not be traced when staff left. The Authority had to re-do analysis for past years based on documents retrieved.
- The Authority had engaged Ernst & Young to prepare the annual accounts for audit and to also provide guidelines to the pre-audit preparation.
- The 2015 audit is expected to be completed in early July 2020.
- Audit of the Financial Accounts for the remaining years from 2016 to 2019 are expected to be completed by 31st December 2020.

8. *Provide further details on the amendments made to the National Fire Service Act 1994 and how it has enabled the expansion of NFA's role beyond Fire Response to an encompassing Emergency Management Services delivery.*

The amendment to the National Fire Service act, 1994 provided for the enlargement of powers and functions of the National Fire Authority, the Establishment of National and Divisional Coordination Committees and Structural Fire Safety Department and strengthening and clarifying the duties and functions of NFA's officers, enhancing the Authority's revenue raising powers and related matters.

The Amendment included the expansion of the role of NFA in the provision of emergency services which includes industrial and road accidents and land oil spills, hazardous materials incidents not involving fire where the main threat or danger is from the effects of fumes, contacts with liquids or solids that could be hazardous to persons or the environment, and hazardous materials incidents up to the stage where the fire has been effectively extinguished.

The Amendment also included the establishment of Divisional and National Coordination centres during natural disasters for which NFA is one of the lead emergency responders whether for firefighting or for flood or swift water rescue operations, or clearance of debris or fallen trees that are hindering movements following natural disasters, or search and rescue operations or the provision of emergency ambulance services.

9. *Who are the current Board Members of the National Fire Authority?*

The National Fire Authority currently has five (5) members of the Board and they are:

1. Mr John O'Connor (Chairman)
2. Mr Peter McPherson (Member)
3. Ratu Aisea Waka Vosailagi (Member)
4. Mr Satish Patel (Member)
5. Mr Inia Naiyaga (Member)

The Board was appointed by the then Honorable Minister for Local Government, Housing & Environment, Infrastructure & Transport on 4th April 2017 for a term of three (3) years and their term has been further extended by the current Minister for Local Government, Housing & Community Development until 31st December 2020.

10. *Provide a breakdown of the \$1.9 million owed to NFA as at 31 December 2013 and whether it has been recovered.*

- 2014 Trade and Other Receivables: \$1,833,414
- The \$1.8m has been collected to date.
- Details are provided in the table below:

Interest Receivable	\$ 31 304 76
Documents Awaiting receipt	\$ 31 647 27
Debtors	\$ 308 688 00
Levy Receivable	\$ 1 455 761 00
Vehicle Accident Recovery	\$ 5 890 02
Post Fiji Advance	\$ 124 95
	<u>\$ 1 833 414 00</u>

11. In light of the many structural fires occurring in Fiji, what is NFA doing to change people's attitude towards the safe handling of fire and ensuring that the necessary fire safety precautions are taken at all times?

NFA conducts the following awareness programs in an effort to change people's attitude towards fire safety:

- i. **House to house awareness programs** – includes talks on fire prevention and safety measures as well as quick inspections of the homes on fire safety compliance level and recommendations for improvement. Visits also include the distribution of fire safety pamphlets.
- ii. **Smokehouse Programs** – very popular program among children and conducted at major charity festivals or community programs with the provision of booth displays of firefighting equipment and talks to groups on fire safety measures. These are also conducted at the Fire Stations and also at Schools, where children undertake a simulated exercise of practically evacuating a burning house or structure.
- iii. **School Fire safety awareness programs** – this is two-fold, the first involving visits to schools and talking to the assembly of children about fire safety measures whilst the second program involves Smokey and the simulated Smokehouse program, which is very popular among the school children of all age groups.
- iv. **The Fire Safety component of the Health Science curriculum** in Primary Schools have been developed and implemented for pupils and teachers in Years 5 & 6 and for Early Child Education and Years 1 & 2.
- v. **Radio and Television programs** – Advertising of fire safety messages through the Radio and Television mediums, whilst effective, have been an expensive mode of advertising. However, partnership arrangements with the likes of Tower Insurance, have enabled the Authority to continue to pursue its fire safety awareness messages through this medium.
- vi. **Stakeholder meetings** – attending tikina or provincial council meetings including community programs have enabled the Authority to talk about fire safety precautions and also demonstrate firefighting strategies that can be applied at residential settings.

The Authority has also strengthened its Structural Fire Safety function, engaging with the municipal councils for the timely conduct of fire safety inspections for businesses before the renewal of annual business licences or liquor licences.

This also includes the strengthening of its building plans vetting process with the local council whereby the Authority's approval is sought to ensure that all fire risk mitigating elements are included in any new development before approval of any building plan by the Council.

12. Fire Service Delivery:

- a) *Provide a breakdown of the Permanent and Volunteer-based fire stations in the four Divisions and how they are manned.*

In 2013, the following Fire Stations were in place and all Fire Stations are manned by Firefighters and managed by a permanent Station Officer:

Central Division	Permanent Officers	Volunteers
1. Suva	74	0
2. Valelevu	25	1
3. Nausori	22	0
4. Navua (Volunteer)	3	7
5. Levuka (Volunteer)	2	10
6. Pacific Harbour (Volunteer)	3	7
Western Division	Permanent Officers	Volunteers
7. Sigatoka	20	0
8. Nadi	29	0
9. Lautoka	26	0
10. Ba	17	1
11. Tavua (Volunteer Station)	10	6
12. Rakiraki (Volunteer Station)	1	13
Northern Division	Permanent Officers	Volunteers
13. Labasa	28	3
14. Savusavu	18	
15. Taveuni (Volunteer Station)	1	11
Total manning		
Total Firefighters	279	59
Total Corporate Services	20	-
Total manning	299	59

- b) *How successful has NFA's efforts been in ensuring that all Fire Stations are manned by Permanent firefighters? What challenges has the Authority faced whilst engaging Temporary & Auxillary Firefighters and Community Volunteers in firefighting operations?*

One of the challenges for NFA has been that these Volunteer Firefighters are not fully trained as career firefighters but through on-the-job training, they have served as volunteer firefighters in the nearest Fire Station. Their engagement has been on a retainer allowance basis and they have also been able to serve at these Volunteer Fire Stations on a 24-hour basis, carrying out firefighting duties under the supervision of a permanent Fire Officer. This Volunteer concept was rectified by Management in 2017 when all existing volunteers with adequate practical experience, underwent a 5 weeks bridging program and were upgraded to fully fledged to career firefighter status and now serving as permanent firefighters in their respective Station postings.

- c) *What are the challenges faced in the maintenance of fire stations in Fiji and other fire appliances and equipment of NFA, in particular, its vehicle fleet?*

A key challenge has been the location of suitable land establish permanent Fire Stations in the areas that NFA has been providing its services. With Government's assistance, NFA has been able to establish new and permanent Fire Stations in such areas as Seaqaqa, Savusavu, Taveuni and Nabouwalu in the North, Rakiraki and Korolevu in the West and Korovou and Nakasi in the Central Division. These new establishments have modernized the Fire Station facilities and enhanced the provision of the Authority's emergency services in these areas.

Another key challenge has been the equipping of these Fire Stations with appropriate firefighting equipment and fire appliances. With Government's assistance and as a cheaper option, the Authority was able to purchase second hand fire trucks from Australia to equip the Fire Stations with vehicles to mobilise our Firefighters; however, this approach had to cease following restrictions in the importation of vehicles over 8 years of age. The Authority secured suppliers and has implemented the procurement of brand new Fire Appliances through:

- a) Fraser Fire New Zealand – Manufacture of 1x 22m Aerial Ladder Truck and 1x Multi-Functional Appliance
- b) SEM Fire and Rescue, Australia – Manufacture of 1x 20,000 litres Water Tanker Fire Truck and a 5-year Contract for the manufacture of new 3,000 litres tank capacity Fire Trucks.
- c) John Dennis Coachbuilders, UK – Supply of 2x 28m Aerial Ladder Trucks.
- d) Carpenters Motors Fiji – Manufacture of 2x 3,000 litres tank capacity Isuzu Fire Trucks.

The procurement of these new fire appliances will progressively replace and modernize the current fast ageing vehicle fleet to complement the growing number of high rise buildings and modern architectural constructions, as well as reduce high maintenance costs of maintaining the old fire appliances.

- d) *Are relevant trainings provided to community volunteers who wish to be recruited as Career Firefighters?*

This is no longer an issue with the National Fire Authority as all Firefighter Volunteers have undergone and completed a bridging program in 2017 resulting in their appointment as permanent Career firefighters. The Authority no longer engages Volunteer Firefighters.

- e) *How has the intermittent water supply in major areas, particularly in the Western Division, impacted the Authority's firefighting operations? What has been the outcome of consultations with the Water Authority of Fiji in this regard? Also, how successful have discussions with community leaders been with regard to high risk areas that do not have a secondary water source.*

During our meetings with WAF with regard to efficiency of supply of water during major fires, we had highlighted that our challenges have always been on low water pressure in fire hydrants and whilst NFA always requests WAF to boost water pressure, WAF's process takes time to close valves and divert water pressure to the required Fire Hydrant locations.

WAF has only two water tank trucks in the West (1x6000 ltrs in Nadi and 1x6000 ltrs in Lautoka) and both trucks cart water as and when the need arises whilst the rest of the districts always hire trucks when water cartage services are required.

Our process during major incidents in the West has been that NFA Control Room calls WAF during major incidents, for their assistance. Apart from this, Rattans Civil works based at Tavua has two 6000lts tank always hired by WAF and in Rakiraki - Bhimas & Sons has one fire truck of 3000lts and 6 x 10,000lts also hired by WAF. NFA has also made a good relationship with both companies and they have always provided their services when requests are made.

- f) *How does NFA determine where to install Fire Hydrants around Fiji? Does NFA carry out awareness on how to use these fire hydrants during a fire?*

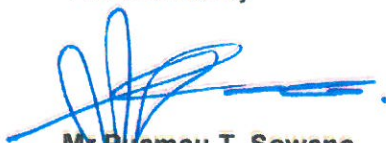
The installation of fire hydrants in any new development is required of the Property Developer and drawings are required for vetting by the Authority to ensure that fire risk mitigating factors such as fire hydrants are adequately provided for in that new development.

The follow up inspections by the Authority on these new developments have been a shortfall and is an area that the Authority is now addressing through the strengthening of its legislation, for the inclusion of interim inspections to ensure that the prescribed fire safety equipment are installed in accordance with the approved drawings.

As a result, there have been notable shortfalls in fire hydrant installations and allocations in areas that have already been developed. In 2010, a total of 2,631 fire hydrants were identified as shortfalls in urban centres around the country and with the assistance of Government grants, the Authority was allocated annual capital grants to coordinate the installation of fire hydrant shortfalls around the country. The Authority continued to take the lead role by working with Water Authority for the installation of new Fire Hydrants in accordance with the prescribed areas agreed to under the conditions of the Capital Grant by Govt. As per the program, 138 fire hydrants were installed in 2010/2011, 67 fire hydrants in 2012 and 84 fire hydrants in 2013.

These fire hydrants are installed by the Water Authority of Fiji and is a priority equipment or tool used by the National Fire Authority during firefighting operations in any area. These fire hydrants are not permitted for any other use unless approval is granted by the Water Authority of Fiji or used by the National Fire Authority to carry out its various emergency roles and responsibilities, as required.

Yours sincerely



Mr Puamau T. Sowane
Chief Executive Officer
National Fire Authority