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## STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

### REVIEW OF:

**Fiji Museum 2016/17 Annual Report**

**Fiji Museum January – July 2016 Annual Report**

**Fiji Museum 2015 Annual Report**



**PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI**  
**Parliamentary Paper No. 26 of 2020**

*September 2020*

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## COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP



### **Chairperson**

Hon. Viam Pillay MP

Government Member

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### **Deputy Chairperson**

Hon. George Vegnathan MP

Government Member

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### **Member**

Hon. Alipate Nagata MP

Government Member

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### **Member**

Hon. Salote Radrodro MP

Opposition Member

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### **Member**

Hon. Dr Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu MP

Opposition Member

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## CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the report of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on the annual review of the Fiji Museum for the period 2016/17, January-July 2016, and 2015.

This review was undertaken 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 2015 to July 2017, conducted into the: Fiji Museum's administration; structure; budgetary allocation; programmes and activities; policies; challenges; highlights; priorities for the coming years; and its implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The committee first met between 2 to 4 March 2020 to deliberate on and formulate questions pertaining to the three Annual Reports of Fiji Museum. We were unable to conduct a public hearing with Fiji Museum due to COVID-19 restrictions put in place around the country when the hearing was scheduled to take place. In order to comply with health directives and social distancing measures in place, the committee requested for a written response from Fiji Museum in lieu of an annual review hearing.

Following our deliberations on its written response, we wrote to Fiji Museum requesting for further clarification on other related matters. Upon receipt of all relevant information from Fiji Museum on the committee's queries, the committee compiled its findings on the Annual Report and subsequently endorsed its report in the latter part of August.

At this juncture, I also wish to thank the Director of the Fiji Museum, Mr. Sipiriano Nemani, and his staff for their assistance in this review process. I also extend my gratitude to my Committee colleagues namely: Hon. George Vagnathan (Deputy Chairperson), Hon. Alipate Nagata, Hon. Salote Radrodoro, and Hon. Dr. Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu for their contributions. Finally, I thank the Secretariat, Ms. Sheron Narayan, Ms. Marica Tuisoso, and Ms. Atelaite Leba for the assistance provided during the committee's deliberations.

I, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, commend our Report on the Fiji Museum 2016/17, January-July 2016 and 2015 Annual Reports to Parliament and request all members of this August House to take note of the Report.



**Hon. Viam Pillay**  
**Chairperson**

# LIST OF ACRONYMS

COVID-19 Pandemic	-	Novel Coronavirus
FICAC	-	Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption
FNPF	-	Fiji National Provident Fund
FY	-	Financial Year
ICOMOS	-	International Council on Monuments and Sites
JICA	-	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MP	-	Member of Parliament
NDP	-	National Development Plan 2017-2021
PDNA	-	Post Disaster Needs Assessment
POAPI Act 1940	-	Preservation of Objects of Archaeological and Paleontological Interest Act 1940
SDGs	-	Sustainable Development Goals
TC Winston	-	Tropical Cyclone Winston
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs has conducted the annual review of the Fiji Museum for 2016/17, January-July 2016 and 2015 and recommends that the House take note of its report.

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The 2016/17, January-July 2016, and 2015 Annual Reports of the Fiji Museum were tabled in Parliament during the February 2020 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.

Furthermore, 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.*”

### **1.1 Committee Procedure**

We met from 2 to 4 March 2020 to read the Annual Reports of the Fiji Museum and prepare questions for our public hearing. We were unable to conduct a public hearing with the Fiji Museum due to COVID-19 restrictions put in place around the country when the hearing was scheduled to take place. In order to comply with health directives and social distancing measures in place, we requested for a written response from Fiji Museum in lieu of an annual review hearing.

We again met on 2 and 3 June 2020 to deliberate on the written response of Fiji Museum following which we wrote to the Museum requesting for further clarification on other related matters. Compilation of the committee's consolidated review Report and its endorsement was done in the latter part of August.

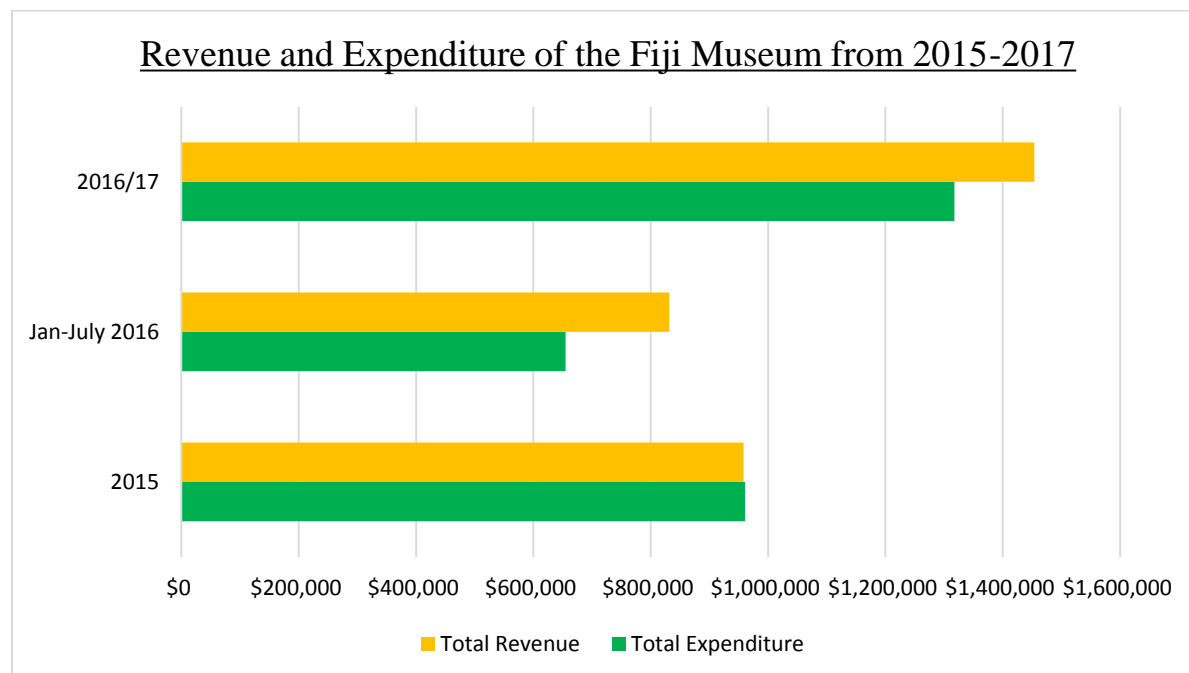
The written and supplementary responses received from Fiji Museum are available on the Parliament website, at the following link: <http://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-social-affairs/>

## 2.0 ABOUT THE ORGANISATION

The Fiji Museum is a statutory organisation established under the Fiji Museum Act. Its principal activity is the safekeeping, preservation and the display of Fiji's historical artefacts.

### 2.1 Financial Performance

The bar graph below depicts the total revenue and expenditure of the Fiji Museum for 2015, January – July 2016, and 2016/17:



In 2016/17, the Fiji Museum's total revenue was \$1,454,043 and its expenditure was \$1,317,456. This resulted in an operating surplus of \$136,587.

In the seven months period ending 31 July 2016, the Fiji Museum's total revenue was \$831,400 and its expenditure was \$654,920. This resulted in an operating surplus of \$176,480.

In 2015, the Museum's total revenue was \$957,957 and its expenditure was \$961,070 resulting in a deficit of \$3,113.

#### 2.1.1 Audit Results

##### Results of the 2015 Audit

The audit of the Fiji Museum for 2015 resulted in the issuance of a disclaimer of opinion. We note that the disclaimer was issued on two grounds:

- (i) The financial statements did not include the comparatives for the year ended 31 December 2014. The Museum was not able to prepare financial reports for the financial years 31 December 2010 to 31 December 2014 as financial information and



records were confiscated for an investigation by the Fiji Independent Commission against Corruption. As at 25 July 2019, the financial information and records had not been returned to the Museum. The auditor also stated that verification of balances as at 31 December 2014 and prior years also entered into their determination of operating surplus and the statement of financial position of the Fiji Museum for the year ended 31 December 2015.

- (ii) Ernst and Young was appointed as auditor of the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2015 in 2018. Alternative audit procedures on revenue from exchange transactions were not practicable due to the timing of the audit and the lack of adequate audit evidence. Consequently, the auditor was unable to confirm the amount recorded as revenue from exchange transactions beyond the amounts recorded in the Museum's books.

## **Results of the 2016/17 & January – July 2016 Audits**

The audits of the Fiji Museum for 2016/17 and January – July 2016 resulted in the issuance of qualified audit opinions. The qualified opinions for both periods was due to the Museum's inability to prepare financial reports for the financial years 31 December 2010 to 31 December 2014 as financial information and records were confiscated for an investigation by FICAC.

The Auditor's Report stated that the financial statements for the 12 months ended 31 July 2017 and the 7 months ended 31 July 2016 included opening balances carried forward from prior years.

The comparatives for the 12 months (1 August 2016 – 31 July 2017) were derived from the financial statements of the Fiji Museum for the period ended 31 July 2016 on which the Auditor issued a qualified opinion. The comparatives for the seven months period (January – July 2016) were derived from the financial statements of the Fiji Museum for the period ended 31 December 2015 on which the Auditor issued a disclaimer of opinion.

### **2.1.2 Employee Benefit Liability**

The auditor also identified that there was no reconciliation maintained for leave entitlements in 2015, January – July 2016 and 2016/17. Accordingly, the balance accrued in the Statement of Financial Position could not be identified. Therefore, the Museum's leave liabilities were expensed in the relevant year when staff utilised their leave entitlements.

We enquired the Fiji Museum on whether this issue had been rectified. Fiji Museum wrote back to us confirming that the issue had been resolved. All Fiji Museum staff now have a Personnel Folder prepared with all leave schedules, use and updates circulated to them. Staff are updated with their leave on a monthly basis. A late arrival report is also prepared to ensure salary and wage cuts are pursued accordingly so staff are punctual and attendance impeccable.

Furthermore, staff now use a new leave form prepared by Management and all appointments have their leave clearly articulated. New leave sanctioned by Government including increased

Maternity Leave, new Family Care Leave and Paternity Leave entitlements are also included in staff leave schedules.

### **2.1.3 Non Functioning Board of Trustees**

The Museum did not have a functioning Board of Trustees in the financial years ended 2015 and 2016. Some of the Board of Trustees<sup>1</sup> were appointed after the end of these two financial periods and to finalise the financial statements for 2015, January – July 2016, and 2016/2017 relied on the documents and financial information provided to them by the Fiji Museum management. We note that in reliance of management’s undertaking that the financial information was accurate and verified, the Trustees approved the financial statements.

We enquired Fiji Museum on why it did not have a functioning Board of Trustees in 2015 and 2016. The Museum told us that the Acting Director Museum then and the Department of Heritage & Arts had made submissions to the Minister for Education, Heritage & Arts, through the Permanent Secretary, on possible nominees to the Fiji Museum Board. The delayed response from the Minister’s Office resulted in no functioning Board for the Fiji Museum within the years specified.

We note that an issue was also faced recently whereby the Chairperson and Board Members’ appointment had lapsed in December 2019 and submission made to the Permanent Secretary for Education, Heritage & Arts then was not attended to until recently. The Museum informed that the Minister has agreed to all its proposed nominees for the Fiji Museum Board and that their appointments were effected on 2nd April 2020.

The Minister for Education, Heritage & Arts recently approved a new Board line-up for the Fiji Museum whose appointments were effected on 2 April 2020. These include:

- (i) Ms. Kate Vusoniwailala (Director of Victoria Wines, former Director of Fiji Museum and Waikato Museum) as Chairperson.
- (ii) The Permanent Secretary for Education, Heritage & Arts as an automatic member of the Board.
- (iii) Mr. Meleti Bainimarama, CEO of the iTaukei Affairs Board, as a Member.
- (iv) Mr. Michael Yee-Joy, Senior Partner for KPMG, as Member.
- (v) Mr. Asaeli Tokalau, Head of Operations, Suva City Council, as Member.

#### **Recommendation**

1. To maintain good governance and accountability, the committee recommends that the Line Ministry must ensure that a fully functional Board of Trustees must exist at all times to enable future planning and good governance of its affairs in a transparent manner.

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<sup>1</sup> Names of the Trustees in office as at 25 July 2019 can be found in the financial statements included as part of the three Annual Reports of Fiji Museum.

### **3.0 COMMITTEE’S OBSERVATIONS AND AREAS OF CONCERN**

#### **3.1 Lack of Resources to Implement the Fiji Museum’s Strategic Plan 2012-2017**

The Museum’s Strategic Plan 2012-2017 is premised on five key strategic priority areas:

- a) Develop national and institutional reputation as a world class museum;
- b) Enhance the Museum’s potential to attract visitors;
- c) Develop a centre of the repository of all Fijian archaeological sites;
- d) Develop a collections and improvement of a collections storage; and
- e) Develop staff and business practice and infrastructure.

However, we note that the strategic plan 2012-2017 lacked resources to supplement its implementation. Resources inculcate operational funds, capital funds for infrastructural expansion, staff with minimal to no qualification relating to museology, and appropriate salary and wages to commensurate with positions and work done.

We are pleased to note that the Museum has endeavoured to address the above issues through the following measures:

- Endorsement of the new Fiji Museum Strategic Plan 2019-2028;
- Appointment of 90% Board members in early 2017 and a new Director with anthropology and cultural heritage management background;
- Budgetary provision of the Museum has been addressed to cater for much needed development. The Fiji Museum Operational Grant from Government increased from a steady \$354,404 (2016/17) to \$410,000 (2017/18) then \$697,525 (2018/19). The Fiji Museum capital grant also increased dramatically from \$232,988 (2016/17) to \$466,500 (2017/18) to \$500,000 (2018/19); and
- Approval of a new salary and wage structure in 2017 resulting in realignment of salary and wages of all staff based on their qualification and experience.

## **Recommendation**

1. The committee recommends that the Fiji Museum work closely with the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts, other Ministries and Departments together with local/international stakeholders to secure adequate funding for its capital and operational costs in the implementation of its Strategic Plan 2019 – 2028.

### **3.2 Absence of a Master Plan**

Overall, the biggest challenge of the Fiji Museum was that it lacked a Master Plan. While the Strategic Plan forms a component (20%) of this bigger plan, the details pertaining to enhancement of the new Museum was deficient.

## **Recommendation**

1. To achieve its long term goals, the committee recommends that the Fiji Museum work in consultation with all local and international stakeholders to draw up and implement a Master Plan.

### **3.3 Dilapidated Museum Infrastructure**

There was also the greater risk posed on the museum and its collection because of its dilapidated infrastructure – the museum collection storage room has a leaking roof, old and bad electrically which can easily set-off a fire, collection on display exposed to elements, and deteriorating status of exhibited collections such as the Ratu Finau Drua.

Upon enquiring the Museum on the works undertaken to upgrade its infrastructure, the Director confirmed that major capital works addressing the relocation of the current shop had been completed, roof leakage addressed, new coffee shop operation in place, new front entrance almost opening and other small works currently underway for the Museum. Presently, Government is funding the rewiring of the 60 year old wiring of the entire Museum. The installations of a transformer and back-up generator are two upcoming big projects that will be implemented soon.

### **Recommendation**

1. That the Fiji Museum work closely with Construction and Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Economy to carry out good survey of its infrastructure to determine structural and related work needed to lay out a long term plan to improve its ageing infrastructure.

### **3.4 Need to Enhance the Museum’s Potential to Attract Visitors**

The Fiji Museum informed us that visitor satisfaction is not up to par because the exhibitions are outdated and the atmosphere inside the Museum galleries is rather dull. As a result, local adults and external visitors continue to pay the same entry fee that was imposed more than 10 years ago.

However, the Museum is working on a major exhibition focusing on voyages and the ocean which is set to transform the current Maritime Gallery. Simultaneously, staff are working towards making amendments to the current “history galleries” that will assist with “re-presenting” the national museum to the community.

### **Recommendation**

1. That the Fiji Museum engage the services of experts locally and abroad to benchmark its exhibitions with other Museums.

### **3.5 Need for the Museum to Generate Alternative Revenue Streams**

The Fiji Museum informed us that it doesn’t receive any revenue from visits by school children. This is after the Ministry of Education, Heritage & Arts directed in 2014 that school children will not pay an entry fee and that the Ministry will pay the Museum an annual payment to cover for the loss of revenue. We note that a one-off payment of \$40,000 was issued to the Museum by the Ministry between 2014 and 2015 however, this was ceased thereafter even as the Museum has continued to provide free access to school children.

### **Recommendation**

1. That the Fiji Museum work with the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts to identify an alternative income stream.

### **3.6 Practise of Good Governance at the Museum**

We note that business integrity and accountability were pressing issues at the Fiji Museum. Administrative and financial transactions' lack of proper procedures and protocols resulted in the FICAC case in early 2015. There was no accurate and thorough filing system for registry, inconsistent salary and wage structure, no financial manual, limited technical policies for exhibitions, conservation and collections, and no audit of accounts conducted.

The Museum has confirmed to us that it is now able to get its accounts audited and updated. Furthermore, the Fiji Museum payroll system, admissions receiving, shop sales and other revenue receivables have been transferred to e-online from the previous manual.

#### **Recommendation**

1. That Fiji Museum continue to practice good governance and strengthen its internal control measures through prudent financial policies.

### **3.7 Urgent Need for Review of the Fiji Museum Act 1929 and the Preservation of Objects of Archaeological and Paleontological Interest Act 1940**

The Fiji Museum Act 1929 and the Preservation of Objects of Archaeological and Paleontological Interest (POAPI) Act 1940 provide the legal parameters for the management and articulation of the Fiji Museum's work. Given the passage of time, the evolving role of museums, and the increasing challenges of operating in a globalised world which exerts tremendous pressure on fragile cultural and natural landscapes, the legal specifications for both Acts now require revision, amendment, and considerable addition to become the legislation to strengthen and drive the museum sector in Fiji.

We enquired the Museum on whether it has made submissions to its line Ministry seeking the review of the two Acts. The Director Museum informed us that the Museum Board has given endorsement to the Museum to proceed with the review of both Acts. A submission was made to the Department of Heritage & Arts and the latter is assisting the Museum in carrying out this function. A Working Group chaired by the Director Museum is involved in the review and the group also includes a representative of the Solicitor General's Office.

## **Recommendation**

1. That the Fiji Museum continue to liaise with the Working Group on the progress of the Review of the Fiji Museum Act 1929 and the Preservation of Objects of Archaeological and Paleontological Interest Act 1940.

### **3.8 Lack of Expert Conservators**

Museum Object Conservation is premised on two levels:

- (a) Preventative Conservation
- (b) Conservation Treatment

To prepare staff to undertake preservation conservation, the Museum has been sending its conservation staff for short term training through JICA Museum courses in Japan and also on professional attachments in museums abroad. This is an area which the Museum's conservation staff are inundated with due to the many conservation works being conducted each year.

We note however, that the Museum lacks an expert in conservation treatment. The Museum has been fortunate to receive assistance by various Museums around the world in the supply of conservation experts to undertake conservation work.

## **Recommendations**

To address the shortages of expert conservators, the Fiji Museum should:

1. Liaise with relevant agencies in obtaining scholarships for its staff to undertake Conservation Studies.
2. Make available proper facilities and resources to ensure that its Conservation staff are able to carry out their conservation work with ease.

### **3.9 Post Disaster Needs Assessment for Cultural Heritage Sites following Tropical Cyclone Winston**

Following TC Winston in 2016, the Fiji Museum was involved in conducting assessment of damages to cultural heritage sites within its ambit of work<sup>2</sup>, in coordination with the Culture Sector Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) Working Committee. The assessment showed

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<sup>2</sup> Sites at which assessments were conducted by the Museum staff can be found on pages 8/9 of the January – July 2016 Fiji Museum Annual Report.

that the Cyclone caused almost \$5million worth of damage to the culture sector in Fiji with Eastern Fiji accounting for 82% of total damages. In as far as recovery needs was concerned, the cultural heritage sector needed \$9.1million.

We enquired the Director Museum on whether restoration works to affected sites under the ambit of the Fiji Museum had been completed and how funding was obtained for the exercise. Confirmation was provided that no funding was provided to the Fiji Museum by the Government or other international organisations such as UNESCO, to assist in the restoration of those sites recognized under the POAPI Act 1940 and highlighted in the Fiji Museum Report to the PDNA Culture Sector Committee that were damaged or destroyed.

We note that funds dedicated by Government towards the restoration of cultural heritage sites affected during TC Winston concentrated mostly on the Historical Port Town of Levuka which is a World Heritage Site.

### **Recommendations**

1. That the Fiji Museum Board of Trustees continue to seek and negotiate vigorously with the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts on restoration works funding.
2. That the Fiji Museum develop a partnership with the local community and stakeholders to assist with the restoration works.

### **3.10 Partial Payment of Government Grant in 2015**

Government grant allocated to the Fiji Museum in 2015 are as follows:

- Capital grant - \$350,000
- Operating grant - \$330,000

We note however, that out of the \$350,000 capital grant allocated, only \$127,298 was received by the Fiji Museum which was used to build new restrooms, a new kitchen, and storage. As for the operational grant, the Museum received only \$213,006 of the total grant of which \$141,762 was used for salaries, wages & FNPF and \$35,440 for maintenance and operations.

### **Recommendation**

1. That the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts ensure that the full grant is disbursed to the Fiji Museum.



### 3.11 Lapsed Annual Reports of the Fiji Museum

We are concerned with the delay in the submission of Fiji Museum’s Annual Reports in accordance with Section 8 of the Fiji Museum Act 1929. The Museum has had a lapse of two years in reporting on its performance and its annual financial statements for the FY 2017-2018 and FY 2018-2019.

#### Recommendation

1. That the Fiji Museum be more vigilant in the timely submission of its Annual Reports in accordance with Section 8 of the Fiji Museum Act 1929.

## 4.0 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

This section of the Report will focus on how Fiji Museum has endeavoured to progress the Sustainable Development Goals and how it has mainstreamed SDGs into its programmes and activities.

SDG GOALS	FIJI MUSEUM ACTIVITIES (PAST & FORESEEN)
<b>SDG 1:</b> End Poverty in all its form everywhere.	The Fiji Museum Shop is a haven for cultural producers and practitioners. Using their traditional skills and knowledge local practitioners develop artistic products which are then sold at the Fiji Museum shop. In 2019, the shop assisted 26 local producers selling their products worth \$46,290.
<b>SDG 2:</b> End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote Sustainable Agriculture.	Promote access to and use of slow food, the Museum purports to work with Ministry of iTaukei Affairs in the not too distant future to foster the use of nutritious local food compared to imported, frozen and canned food.
<b>SDG 4:</b> Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.	Through the Fiji Museum Education Unit, the team has organized numerous workshops and classes for children and youths focus on culture, heritage and museology.
<b>SDG 10:</b> Reduce inequality within and among Countries.	Working to enhance employment experience for staff through increment in salaries and wages – try and reduce income gaps. For disabilities, the development of new infrastructure around the Museum to allow easy access by people with disabilities has been implemented and will be a key element of any future infrastructural blueprint set for the Fiji Museum.

<p><b>SDG 11:</b> Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.</p>	<p>The Fiji Museum has participated and spearheaded discussions in the past and any future undertakings regarding the Thurston Gardens. The Museum will continue to be vocal about this heritage precinct within the capital city to ensure that it is maintained, restored and appreciated.</p>
<p><b>SDG 13:</b> Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</p>	<p>The upcoming major exhibition of the Fiji Museum will create awareness about climate change. A senior staff of the Fiji Museum is the national representative to the ICOMOS Subcommittee on Museums and Climate Change raising awareness at international level about the importance of protecting cultural heritage sites in the face of climate change.</p> <p>In collaboration with the Sunshine Coast University, Fiji Museum Archaeology Team are working in collaboration to understand the impact of climate change in Fiji by studying changes to landscapes and cultural migration using archaeological tools.</p>
<p><b>SDG 14:</b> Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable</p>	<p>The Fiji Museum is focusing on oceans, sustainable use of our oceans and voyaging in its upcoming major</p>

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs has fulfilled its mandate by Parliament which was to examine the 2015-2017 Annual Reports of Fiji Museum.

The Fiji Museum is a statutory organisation established under the Fiji Museum Act. Its principal activity is the safekeeping, preservation and the display of Fiji's historical artefacts.

This report captures pertinent issues faced by the Fiji Museum in the period under review and makes several recommendations to the Museum for the remedy of these issues.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS' SIGNATURE

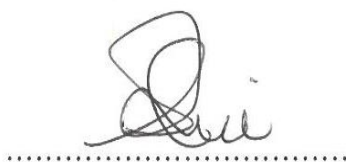
We, the Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, hereby agree with the contents of this report:



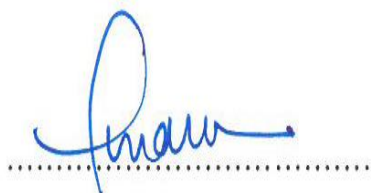
Hon. Viam Pillay  
(Chairperson)



Hon. George Vignathan  
(Deputy Chairperson)



Hon. Alipate Nagata  
(Member)



Hon. Salote Radrodoro  
(Member)



Hon. Dr. Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu  
(Member)

# APPENDIX

## Published written evidence

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