

APPENDICES

Appendix I

**Written Response by the
Fiji National University**

Response to the Parliament Standing Committee on Social Affairs Annual Report 2020

1. Page 15 of Annual Report - We note that there were a few capital projects undertaken during the period under review. Update us on all projects undertaken, those that have been completed, and those pending completion and completion timeline. Highlight the challenges faced in meeting project completion deadline.

1.1. Projects Completed

New Builds	Project Name	Construction Start Date	Project Completion Date	Challenges
	NTPC Technical Training Building at Naceva Campus	24 th May 2018	August 2020	
	Sports Complex at Nasinu Campus	22 nd January 2019	December 2020	*Covid-19 Restrictions *travelling restrictions of specialized personnel for installation of selected components *Wet Weather
Refurbishments	Prosthetic Lab at Pasifika Campus	29 th January 2020	March 2020	*Constrained project timeframe
	Engineering Research & Development Centre at Derrick campus	15 th January 2019	September 2020	

Infrastructure Projects	Project Name	Construction Start Date	Project Completion Date	Challenges
	Electrical Services at the School of Nursing	29 th November 2019	February 2020	*Wet Weather *Procurement and planning for hazardous works relating to tank demolition works
	Design & Installation of Solar PV System at Namaka Campus	28 th March 2019	June 2020	*Wet Weather *Completing Glare Study Report
	Sewer Reticulation Upgrade works at Nasinu Campus	18 th May 2020	October 2020	*Covid 19 Restrictions

1.2. Projects in Construction Phase

1.2.1. 3 Storey building at FMA

Construction Start Date	Anticipated Completion Date	Progress as of June 2022	Challenges
1 st August 2018	August 2022	85%	*Covid-19 Restrictions *Supply Chain Issues *Wet Weather *Contractor Default

1.2.2. 4 Storey CBHTS Complex, Nasinu Campus

Construction Start Date	Anticipated Handover	Progress as of June 2022	Challenges
2-Dec-2018	July 2022	94%	*Covid-19 Restrictions *Supply Chain Issues *Wet Weather

2. Update us on the progress made on the completion of Labasa Campus. What has hindered its completion and inform us of whether any changes were made to the initial budgetary allocation and if so, for what purpose.

2.1. Labasa Campus (Naiyaca) - Progress

The project was at 47% completion when work was halted in March 2020. Since then, no work has been carried out on site. The overall project consisted of the main building, a services yard, porte coche're, carparks, and a walkway from the road to the main building.

2.2. What hindered the Project

2.2.1. The project was hindered due to the following reasons:

- 2.2.1.1. Continuous contractual defaults by the contractor which were non-payment issues to sub-contractors and workers. There was a lack of progress from August 2019 to March 2020 after numerous meetings/reminders. The main contractor was terminated on 13th March 2020 due to unsatisfactory progress with the project.
- 2.2.1.2. Upon termination, the contractor made claims against FNU for unlawful termination and for stay-order on the performance bond. The litigation was finally completed in October 2021 in favour of FNU.
- 2.2.1.3. The University Council is looking at options for progressing the unfinished work. That may include repurposing the current site to suit the University's needs for Labasa. In doing this it will work closely with both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Economy.

2.3. Budgetary Allocations

The project budget has not changed. The project commencement will be dependent on the confirmation of a revised plan to progress the site to suit university purposes and value for money.

3. Brief us on the online and distance learning modes of course delivery and its effectiveness particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Highlight the challenges faced in the transition to this new learning platform mode.

Overall, in terms of the pandemic, FNU was ready to take on the challenge of full online delivery, i.e., proper support was well established from 2018 when the Centre for Flexible and E-Learning (CFEL) & Centre Learning and Teaching Enhancement (CLTE) was established.

Alternative and Supplementary assessments were also an added provision during those challenging semesters. So, there was that approach of compassion, flexibility and understanding throughout.

Issues of teacher and students' preparedness for this may have come down to whether they took the many opportunities available to them prior. e.g., via guides, workshops, online resources, and regular updates. Moodle is still clearly the most accessed learning platform at FNU.

Access to technology was, and is still, a challenge for remote students regarding online/blended learning: access is challenged on 2 levels – laptop/tablet/PC, and data. We established that smart phones were not conducive to online learning, especially for extended periods when campuses were closed. Students were also given the option at that time to withdraw/ put on hold or drop a course if they felt they were not able to properly learn remotely.

Adjusted to blended learning as the new norm

It would be a lost opportunity to simply revert to face-to-face courses given that online and distance learning can be more inclusive if done well and it allows students to personalize their learning journey. To do this well, we continue to scaffold as far as online/ blended mode learning is concerned. While mediated by CLTE and the CFEL guides, FNU continues to further finesse support for independent, self-directed learning (an age-old challenge in distance education).

Blended/Online modes require proper development investment – they cannot be done as a cheap alternative. Hence, from 2022, a reverse design approach was implemented following

the Moodle course page audit exercise for 2020 & 2021. We are targeting a high percentage of blended/ online reviewed courses and approaching teachers to take-up these changes.

Key deliverables resulting from the pandemic

- The Moodle FAQ for Students by CFEL released in 2022.
- Mandatory use of Moodle for all FNU courses was implemented in 2021; all courses officially activated for teaching in a term via our student management system (Banner), automatically have a Moodle shell implemented.
- The Minimum Standards for Online Teacher/Teaching Presence introduced in 2021 are being reviewed and will be integrated into the online/blended mode development work for teachers by the CFEL and CLTE teams.
- The Online Assessment Policy from 2021 and Learning Management System Guidelines from 2019 are undergoing revisions.
- CLTE continues their virtual drop-in sessions approach from 2020/21 for teachers into 2022.
- The CFEL learning design team has mapped out a college check-in (physical) schedule this year to mediate the last 2 years of pure virtual support and reconnect with teachers, and new training needs survey for teachers is in progress to gauge Moodle skill deficiencies that need more focus or revision.

4. Apprenticeship and Trade Testing Scheme – We note that there were 277 apprentices in training at various trade and technician levels. Provide details of the different training areas and whether the University collaborates with other relevant organizations in ensuring proper training is given to apprentices.

Name of Employer	Central	Western	Northern	Total
Asco Motors	8	3	0	11
Aquaheat	1	3	0	4
Bluescope Pacific Steel (Fiji) Ltd	1	0	0	1
British American Tobacco	2	0	0	2
Carpenters Fiji Limited	7	5	1	13
CAS Scale (Fiji) Ltd	0	2	1	3
Communication Technologies	2	0	0	2
Douglas Pharmaceuticals Fiji Ltd	0	8	0	8
Elia Engineering Ltd	0	4	0	4
Energy Fiji Limited (FEA)	27	39	18	84
Fiji Rice	0	0	1	1
Fiji Gas Limited	0	1	0	1
Fiji Sugar Corporation Ltd-Ba	0	12	0	12
Fiji Sugar Corporation Ltd-Lautoka	0	19	0	19

Fiji Sugar Corporation - Labasa	0	0	18	18
Fiji Ships	2	0	0	2
FMF - Biscuit Company of Fiji Ltd	6	0	0	6
Goodman Fielder International Ltd	9	0	0	9
Government Shipping Services	10	0	0	10
Kooltech Refrigeration	1	0	0	1
Lincoln Refrigeration Limited	6	0	0	6
Matec Motors & Spares	1	0	0	1
Natural Waters of Viti Ltd	0	4	0	4
Narsey's Plastics Industries Limited	1	0	0	1
Niranjans Autoport Limited	10	10	8	28
Nutech Sales & Service Limited	1	0	0	1
S.C. Foods	0	2	0	2
Shreedhar Motors Limited	1	2	0	3
Rao's Autoport	0	0	1	1
Serendip	8	0	0	8
Sigatoka Electric	0	1	0	1
Topik Furniture & Joinery Limited	0	3	0	3
United Containers Fiji Limited	1	1	0	2
Valebasoga Tropik Boards Ltd	0	0	1	1
Wormald Fire & Security	2	2	0	4
Total	107	121	49	277

The apprenticeship scheme is offered at Trade and Technician Level occupations and the apprentices complete their course of instruction at certificate IV and diploma qualifications respectively.

Trade Level	Total
Aircraft Maintenance	0
Automotive Electrical	15
Automotive Mechanic	21
Boiler Making	0
Carpentry	0
Cook	0
Electrical Fitter Mechanic	74
Electronic	13
Fitting and Machining	19
Heavy Commercial Vehicle Mechanic	8
Heavy Mobile Plant Mechanic	7
Industrial Sewing Machine Mechanic	0
Joinery and Cabinet Making	4
Manufacturing Engineering	9
Panel Beating	11
Plant Maintenance Engineering	7

Plumbing	8
Printing	8
Refrigeration and Air conditioning	14
Saw Doctor	0
Shipwright	0
Welding and Fabricating	14
Total	232

Technician Level	Total
Automotive Engineering	0
Electrical Engineering	17
Mechanical Engineering	0
Plant Engineering	6
Telecommunication Engineering	12
Marine Engineering	3
Navigation & Seamanship	7
Total	45

The University works closely with the various employers to ensure that apprentices are provided with the necessary training to become competent tradespeople.

In cases where an employer is unable to provide any specific training, the apprenticeship team organizes cross-training of apprentices with other employers. The cross-training identifies the key areas that the apprentice is to gain exposure and practical work experience to successfully complete his/ her apprenticeship training.

- 5. Page 36 of Annual Report – There were number of positions advertised where only limited positions were filled. How does this affect efficient service delivery in terms of working towards its ambitious goals and targets? Concurrently, we note that there were a number of staff who went on full time study leave. How did the University ensure that other relevant staff were identified to fill these roles?**

The positions were not filled due to appointees who were offered contracts being unable to travel from their home countries due to Covid restrictions. For some, we were able to get them to teach online from their home countries and we paid them as consultants. Most programmes were run online for the Covid period. We also employed part-time teachers from the industry to teach some programmes online or face to face during that period.

For those who went on study leave, we made temporary appointments based on our minimum academic qualifications to cover these staff for the duration of their study

- 6. Page 55 of Annual Report – Provide us with an update on the Natabua Campus and whether the dormitory is sufficient to cater to the demand of students from maritime islands who require accommodation.**

The Hostel Facility at Natabua accommodates 446 students when available in full capacity. We have 4 female dormitories and 1 male dormitory in the renovation program this year. However, the facility has enough space to cater to maritime students as they are being given the priority to be accommodated, following the Hostel Regulation of the University based on the locality.

Financial Statements of the Fiji National University for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

- 7. Page 67 of Annual Report (Income) – We note that there was a reduction in income streams of the University. How did this affect the University's service delivery?**

- The income had decreased because of covid 19.
- The income across all streams declined except tuition income in 2020.
- The university had been prudent in managing the discretionary expenses.
- The closure of the borders and the campuses in 2020 had greatly helped the university to control its discretionary spending.
- The University had to quickly adapt to teaching the students through flexible learning.
- The services were not significantly impacted and all students who were impacted were assisted to complete the studies through the extension of assignment deadlines etc.

- 8. Page 71 of Annual Report (Non-Current Assets) – We note that there were dues to be paid to the University by the Ministry of Health & Medical Services and the Ministry of Agriculture. Update us on whether the funds have been received and if not, what sort of arrangement has been made with the two Ministries in ensuring that these finds are received.**

The funds have not been received as follows:

- a. Ministry of Health - \$563,602 (\$500,000 for Fiji School of Medicine (FSM) 4th quarter grant & \$63,602 short payment for Fiji School of Nursing (FSN) Grant); and
- b. Ministry of Agriculture \$100,000 - short payment for Fiji College of Agriculture (FCA) Grant.

The outstanding debt is from the merger of the colleges in 2010 and remains outstanding to date. The University has followed up on the outstanding grant payment on several occasions with the respective Ministries, which has been turned down due to the non-allocation of budget.

The Ministries were asked by the Ministry of Economy to look within their budgetary allocations and identify savings from which the payments can be sourced but to date, nothing has been sorted. Therefore, these remain as outstanding.

9. We note that the finalization of boundaries and allocation of land leases to certain properties were not completed as of December 2019. State these properties and the progress made on negotiations with the relevant Ministries.

Property Name	Current Update
Legalega	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FNU has the Agreement for lease of this property from TLTB for 99 years from 2005. There are 33 Conditions from the Department of Town & Country Planning (DTCP) which must be fulfilled before a proper TLTB lease is made under FNU's name. FNU has made an application for deferment and waiver of conditions till the development stage.
Nasinu Campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FNU has the Approval Notice of this property for 99 years from 2018. FNU's engaged surveyor is addressing the comments from Nasinu Town Council and DTCP.
Koronivia Campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Lease is being processed by TLTB. Ministry of Agriculture has surrendered the three portions of the CAFF that is FNU's boundary
Natabua (Beside Lautoka Corrections Centre)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FNU has the Approval Notice of this property for 99 years from 2014. FNU has made an application for deferment and waiver of conditions till the development stage.
MacGregor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area occupied by FNU has been surrendered to FNU by Ministry of Health. FNU's application will be processed after the requirements of Fiji Roads Authority is met. This is being facilitated by our surveyors.

Appendix II

**Supplementary Response
by the
Fiji National University**

Sustainable Livelihood Project (SLP) Training – over 30,000 rural dwellers trained from 2012-2022

No.	Province	# of Participants
1	Ba	4276
2	Bua	1091
3	Cakaudrove	3284
4	Kadavu	890
5	Lau	450
6	Lomaiviti	1,754
7	Macuata	1,099
8	Nadroga Navosa	2,062
9	Naitasiri	3,608
10	Namosi	814
11	Ra	1,738
12	Rewa	3,151
13	Serua	1,280
14	Tailevu	4,808
15	Rotuma	162
TOTAL		30,467

Community and Alternative Learning (CAL) Training in peri-urban/ urban communities and settlements

Community & Alternative Learning (CAL)		
No.	Course	# of Participants
1	Care Giver	420
2	Business & IT Fundamentals	1391
3	Screen Printing	25
4	Baking & Patisserie	59
5	Cookery	40
6	Floriculture	20
7	Garment Construction	20
8	Basic Computing & Business Skills	20
9	Wooden House Construction	55
10	Household & Sanitary Plumbing	55
11	Block Laying	30
12	Small Engines Repair	50
13	Solar Installation & Maintenance	50
14	Health Leadership	100
TOTALS		2,335

APPENDIX II

Verbatim Report on the Fiji National University Public Submission

VERBATIM REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS HELD IN THE BIG COMMITTEE ROOM (EAST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, ON THURSDAY, 16TH JUNE, 2022 AT 11.41 A.M.

Interviewee/Submittee: Fiji National University (FNU)

In Attendance:

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------|---|---|
| 1. | Dr. William May | - | Acting Vice-Chancellor |
| 2. | Mr. Shalendra Gounden | - | Director Estates and Facilities |
| 3. | Mr. Nilesh Prasad | - | Director Finance |
| 4. | Professor Lisa Harrison | - | Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching |
| 5. | Mr. Niranjwan Chettiar | - | Director Capital/Project |
| 6. | Mr. Alvin Lal | - | Manager Apprenticeship and Trade Testing/Member of National Training and Productivity Centre, NTPC. |
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MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, I declare this meeting of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs open. Today's hearing is open to the public and I welcome the members of the public and the media, who maybe viewing this broadcast on the Parliament television and *Facebook*.

We are now hearing evidence from the Fiji National University (FNU) in relation to its Operational and Financial Performance for the 2020 Financial Year. This is the first of the three submissions to be received today, the other two being the Housing Authority of Fiji (HA) and the Public Rental Board (PRB).

Before we continue, I remind everyone in this room that mobile phones are to be switched off. Witnesses are reminded that evidence given to the Committee is protected by Parliamentary privileges and it is important for witnesses to be aware that giving false or misleading evidence to the Committee might constitute a contempt of Parliament. If, at any stage, a witness wishes to give part of their evidence in camera. They should make that request to me as the Chairman and the Committee will consider their request.

Today, we have with us the Acting Vice-Chancellor of FNU, Dr. William May. We welcome you, Sir, and I believe we have an hour with you. Before we proceed, further I will let the Members of the Committee introduce themselves beginning with myself.

(Introduction of Committee Members)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Acting Vice-Chancellor, the normal procedure is that, we invite witnesses to make an opening statement and introduce themselves, after which we will hear your response to the Committee's queries which were sent earlier, and then you can make yourselves available for questions from the Committee. Thank you.

DR. W. MAY.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Parliamentary Committee on Social Affairs. I would like to introduce our team here this morning from FNU.

(Introduction of FNU Team by Vice-Chancellor)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Acting Vice-Chancellor. For the benefit of our viewers, please, read the questions that were sent to you, followed by the University's response. The floor is yours now Sir.

DR. W. MAY.- Thank you Mr. Chairman and the Committee, the questions are as follows.

Question No. 1: Page 15 of Annual Report - We note that there were a few capital projects undertaken during the period under review. Update us on all projects undertaken, those that have been completed, and those pending completion and completion timeline. Highlight the challenges faced in meeting project completion deadline.

In response, the University had two new buildings in 2020; one of them was the NTPC Technical building at Naceva Campus in Lautoka that was completed in August 2020 and the second one was the sports complex at Nasinu, that was completed in December 2020.

We had two refurbishments for the same year as well, as follows:

1. Dental Prosthetic Lab at the Pasifika Campus; and
2. Engineering Research and Development Centre at Derrick Campus in Samabula. They were completed in March 2020 and September 2020 respectively.

In terms of the infrastructure projects for those years, we had three, the:

1. electrical services at the School of Nursing that was completed in February 2020;
2. design and installation of the Solar PV System at the Namaka Campus that was completed in June; and
3. sewer reticulation upgrade works at the Nasinu Campus that was completed in October.

We also had two major construction projects at that time, the:

1. three-storey building at the Fiji Maritime Academy that is still ongoing and we anticipate that, that project will be completed in August 2020. So there is a delay in that project and is currently at 35 percent completion in terms of progress.
2. College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies Complex four-storey building at Nasinu and it is anticipated that, that building will be handed over in July 2020.

There have been some delays and challenges we encountered with these projects, Mr. Chairman and honourable Members of the Committee which are refurbishment, apart from the COVID restrictions in 2019. So, it is just the travelling restrictions that was associated with the installation of some specialised components of buildings, particularly the Nasinu Sports Complex, the constraint project timeframe and the wet weather that delayed the projects. Procurement planning was also an issue for us.

The other last two projects, Mr. Chairman and honourable Committee Members which were the buildings at Maritime and College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies (CBHTS). Those were significantly delayed in 2021. We restarted with the projects as soon as the borders allowed and the national priorities and directives changed.

Question No. 2: Update us on the progress made on the completion of Labasa Campus. What has hindered its completion and inform us of whether any changes were made to the initial budgetary allocation and if so, for what purpose?

The project at the Labasa Naiyaca Campus is 40 percent completed. The work was halted in March 2020. Since then, no work has been carried out on the site. The overall project consisted of the main building, car parks and walkways.

The issues with the contract was the continuous contractual defaults by the contractor at that time and the non-payment issues to subcontractors, as well as the workers. So, there was a lack of progress, and the University saw it fit in March 2020 after numerous meetings and reminders to terminate the contract because of unsatisfactory progress.

Upon termination, there were court cases against the University for the unlawful termination that was alleged by the contractor and stay-order on the performance bond but we were able to recover that performance bond. The hearing of the Labasa Project is continuing and the next hearing will be towards the end of the month.

The University Council, in its recent meeting last weekend, is looking at options of progressing the unfinished work and that may include repurposing the current site to suit the strategy of the University in moving forward, as well as align the building with the Look North Policy of Government, and we are in consultation as well with the two Ministries of Education and Economy, and we want to ensure that our plans are run by the two Ministries to fit in the wider vision of the nation that the University needs to align with for the building in the North.

Question No. 3: Brief us on the online and distance learning modes of course delivery and its effectiveness particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Highlight the challenges faced in the transition to this new learning platform mode.

In response to this question, Mr. Chairman and honourable Committee Members, the University was ready with its online learning platform from 2018. In preparation, we set up two Centres which were the Centre for Flexible Learning and E-Learning (CFEL) and the Centre for Learning and Teaching Enhancement (CLTE). They were established in 2018. During the pandemic, we were positioned to move swiftly into the space of full online for the six weeks in 2020 and, of course, that continued to 2021.

The issues of teachers and students preparedness for this may have come down to whether they took the opportunities available unto them prior to that and most of the staff did that. Opportunities were via guides, online resources and regular updates, and Moodle is still clearly the most access learning platform at the University.

Moving online had posed a few challenges and there were two less in particular, the:

1. accessibility of the device for students, as the mobile phones were not conducive to most of the learning; and
2. when the device is available, the availability of data for the students.

In order for us to navigate these issues, we had provisions of extending their assignments and the coursework requirements for the students to cater for the learning and account for the challenges. And the University took a very compassionate and flexible approach towards the students during COVID-19 in order to fulfil their learning requirements. We also gave the option for those who were

struggling to defer their studies or to withdraw; put a hold on their studies until they were able to properly learn remotely.

We also adjusted to blended learning as the new norm. It would be a lost opportunity for the University to simply revert to face-to-face, so to do that, we continue scaffold, as far as our online journey is concerned, through online and blended mode of learning.

While mediated by the CLTE and the CFEL guides, we continue to further finesse support for independent and self-directed learning.

Blended modes still require proper development and investment. They are not viewed as a cheap alternative. From 2022, we had a reverse design approach and that was implemented following the Moodle course page audit in 2020 and 2021 on what the University did, and we are targeting a high percentage of blended and online reviewed courses approach to increase the teacher take-up with these changes.

The University also, post-COVID-19 in 2021, looked at our current Moodle platform to review what we can do better for the students and for the teachers. We applied minimum standards for online teaching and the presence of online teacher, what was the required minimum expectations for the University for its staff.

We also introduced Online Assessment Policy so that the staff and students understood the assessments while online and the challenges going on. We also had provisions for virtual drop-ins now post-COVID-19 for staff to be helped and enhanced learning from what was learnt during the COVID-19 period.

Question No. 4: Apprenticeship and Trade Testing Scheme. We note that there were 277 apprentices in training at various trade and technician levels. Provide details of the different training areas and whether the University collaborates with other relevant organizations in ensuring proper training is given to apprentices.

In response, we would like to report that the Apprenticeship Scheme is offered at Trade and Technician level. We had a total of 232 trainees at the trade level and 45 at the technician level, totalling 277 both at the Certificate IV and Diploma qualifications respectively.

We worked closely with various employers to ensure that apprentices are provided with necessary training to become competent tradespeople. In cases where an employer is unable to provide any specific training, the apprenticeship team organises cross-training of apprentices with other employers.

Also the identification of the key areas that the apprentice is to gain exposure from in practical work experience to successfully complete their training. So in response to that question, we fully engage with the industry for our training both, in the trade and the technician level.

Question No. 5: Page 36 of Annual Report. There were number of positions advertised where only limited positions were filled. How does this affect efficient service delivery in terms of working towards its ambitious goals and targets? Concurrently, we note that there were a number of staff who went on full time study leave. How did the University ensure that other relevant staff were identified to fill these roles?

In response, the positions were not filled due to appointees who were offered contracts being unable to travel from their home countries due to the restrictions in 2020, and that continued to last

year as well. For some, Mr. Chairman and honourable Committee Members, we were able to get them to teach online from their home countries and we paid them as consultants. Most programmes were run online for the COVID period. We also employed part-time teachers from the industry to teach some programmes online or face to face during that period. Sir, for those who went on study leave, we made temporary appointments based on our minimum academic qualifications, to cover those staff for the duration of their study.

Question No. 6: Page 55 of the Annual Report. Provide us with an update on the Natabua Campus and whether the dormitory is sufficient to cater to the demand of students from maritime islands who require accommodation.

The hostel facility at Natabua accommodates 446 students when available in full capacity. We are currently renovating four female dormitories and one male dormitory in the renovation programme this year. However, the facility has enough space to cater for maritime students, as they are being given the priority to be accommodated. The University has got an accommodation policy in terms of prioritisation of accommodation and the priority is first given to those who live outside 30 kilometre radius from wherever their institution and programme is offered for the student. So the priorities are for maritime and those outside towns and cities.

Question No. 7: Financial Statements of the Fiji National University for the Year Ended 31 December 2020 - Page 67 of Annual Report (Income). We note that there was a reduction in income streams of the University. How did this affect the University's service delivery?

The response is as follows:

1. The income had decreased because of COVID-19 in 2020.
2. The income across all streams declined, except tuition income in 2020.
3. The University had prudent measures in place to manage its expenses, particularly the discretionary expenses, and we will be happy to highlight if there are still further questions around this area.
4. The closure of the borders and the Campuses in 2020 had greatly impacted the University to control its discretionary expenses, for example, doing activities that would normally be carried out outside internally within our facilities.
5. The services were not significantly impacted and all students who were impacted were assisted to complete their studies through extension of assignments and deadlines.

Question No. 8: Page 71 of Annual Report (Non-Current Assets) – We note that there were dues to be paid to the University by the Ministry of Health & Medical Services and the Ministry of Agriculture. Update us on whether the funds have been received and if not, what sort of arrangement has been made with the two Ministries in ensuring that these funds are received.

The funds have not been received as follows:

1. Ministry of Health and Medical Services - a total of \$563,602 both, from the former Fiji School of Medicine and the Fiji School of Nursing; and
2. Ministry of Agriculture - \$100,000, for short payment of the Fiji College of Agriculture Grant at that time.

The outstanding debts were from the pre-merger of the Colleges in 2010, and remains outstanding to date. The University has followed up on the outstanding grant on several occasions with the respective Ministries, which has been turned down due to the non-allocation of budget.

The Ministries were also asked by the Ministry of Economy to look within their budgetary allocations to see if they could identify savings from the payments and if that could be sourced from within those savings, but to date, we have not received any response from those Ministries and that remains outstanding.

Question No. 9: We note that the finalization of boundaries and allocation of land leases to certain properties were not completed as of December 2019. State these properties and the progress made on negotiations with the relevant Ministries.

It was noted that the finalisation of the boundaries and allocation of land leases to certain properties were not completed as of December 2019, and we were to state if these properties and the progress made on negotiations with the relevant Ministries.

There are four properties in particular that I would like to highlight, as follows:

1. Legalega property in Nadi - FNU has the agreement for lease for this property from iTLTB for 99 years from 2005. There are 33 conditions from the Department of Town and Country Planning which must be fulfilled by the University before a proper lease is made to the University's name. We have requested through an application for deferment and waiver of conditions till the development stage.
2. Nasinu Campus- FNU has the approval notice of this property for 99 years from 2018. The FNU has engaged a surveyor to address the comments from the Nasinu Town Council and the Director of Town and Country Planning.
3. Koronivia Campus - the lease is being processed by iTLTB. The Ministry of Agriculture has surrendered the three portions of the College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, that is the FNU's boundary.
4. Natabua Campus (beside the Lautoka Corrections Centre) - FNU has the approval notice of this property for 99 years from 2014. We have made an application for deferment and waiver of the conditions till the development stage.
5. MacGregor property (adjacent to the Hospital Compound in Lautoka) - The area occupied by the FNU has been surrendered to the University by the Ministry of Health, and FNU's application will be processed after the requirements of the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) is met. This is being facilitated by our surveyors.

That, Mr. Chairman and honourable Members, concludes the questions and responses from the University to the Standing Committee on Social affairs today.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Dr. May, for the responses provided to the Committee. Honourable Members, we will open for questions.

HON. G. VEGNATHAN.- Mr. Chairman, my question is no Question No. 9 with regards to the properties in Legalega and Natabua adjacent to the Lautoka Corrections Centre. What is the response from the Department of Town and Country Planning so far?

MR. W. MAY.- Mr. Chairman, we would like our Director Capital and Properties to respond to that question.

MR. N. CHETTIAR.- Mr. Chairman, we have a positive response so far at the moment from the Department of Town and Country Planning. There are, at the moment, investigation in terms of the way forward for the University, so we plan to meet them towards the end of this month to see the solutions.

HON. G. VEGNATHAN.- Mr. Chairman, also with regards to the MacGregor property, is it with FRA with regards to the road conditions, are they working on this too?

MR. N. CHETTIAR.- For this one, we are working together with Ministry of Health and now since ASPEN is also another party in that particular property, we are also having a consultation with all the three members and hopefully, we can come up with a solution on this. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Salote Radrodro.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you, Dr. May, for your presentation. My question is on the Labasa Campus at Naiyaca and one of the points that you have raised is that, the University Council is looking at options for progressing the unfinished work and that may include the repurposing of the current site.

The question is whether you will get the value for money in having to repurpose this site and why is FNU not looking at the option of completing the Campus for the benefit of the students up in the North because I think the facilities may be very limited? I am also drawing your attention to the Technical Colleges in the North that may have closed down. For example, the one in Bua. What is the plan of FNU in regards to those existing facilities, bearing in mind that the Campus at Naiyaca is at this stage? So, you have those facilities that were used as Technical Colleges and they have been closed down. Do you have any plans in having to utilise those facilities to be able to give the opportunities that the students deserve up at the North?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, honourable Member. Yes, Dr. May.

DR. W. MAY.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In response to their intention to complete the Naiyaca site, at this point, the discussions are around, if we were to complete the building as is in terms of the current plan at that time whether it was still fit for purpose compared to the direction of travel for the need of the country at this point in time.

The building intention at that time, the way we look at it right now, need to respond to the current needs of TVET in particular, and the other associated programmes for the North. That this why, Mr. Chairman and honourable Members of the Committee, there is discussion in Council on whether the current plan to finish it off would actually answer the Northern Division's need at this point in time, or we will have to modify the current existing building, of course, taking in value for money for the building to accommodate the current need in terms of both the areas of higher education and TVET programmes for the Northern Division. How does that align with the current strategy of the University from 2021 to 2026? That is the discussion that we are having right now.

That is where the discussion around completing the building for the sake of completion and not meeting the immediate needs and purpose that might have changed from the time the intention of the building to build at that time to now could have changed and has changed, and this is where we are aligning ourselves with, the completion of the building.

With regards to people from the North in TVET programmes, like the closing down of Bua and the others, at this point the University has no intention of opening those centres right now, but

providing a cheaper alternative for students in the North, but not sacrificing the quality for renting out a space in the Naduna Campus to offer automotive engineering and other TVET programmes for students in the North at that campus in Naduna. So, that is the current alternative for students, apart from the Campuses that have closed down. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and honourable Members of the Committee.

HON. A. NAGATA.- Thank you, Dr. May, and your team. Just a follow up question on your response to Question No. 3, the fourth paragraph which states, "Students were also given the option at that time to withdraw/put on hold or drop a course if they felt they were not able to properly learn remotely". What happens to those who did not withdraw and never attended any online learning at all, especially those students under TSLB sponsorship?

DR. W. MAY.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For students who did not withdraw from the system, for example, if we had identified that they never withdrew which some students did, they never withdrew, what the University does is we track their activity whether they were engaged in the learning and teaching process for the year. If they were not engaged, we would not bill them for that particular course, so they had the opportunity to come back and redo the programmes or the courses that they were not engaged in. So, we do not take the stand, Mr. Chairman and honourable Members of the Committee, to automatically say, "Students, because you did not engage, you come and repeat". We waive the fees for those students because there was no activity carried out during that period of time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. RATU T. NAVURELEVU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you Dr. May and your team. We must thank you for your untiring effort in looking after the management of FNU. My question is, can you enlighten the Committee on the main contractor and elaborate more about the court case?

DR. W. MAY.- Mr. Chairman, the main contractor was Kartika Construction. The ongoing court case was regarding two things, the first one is the performance bond that we have secured from the contractor and secondly was the unfair dismissal and some of the claims by the contractor. This is pending hearing, the court has asked us to produce documents of compliance from both parties and we have submitted ours for that. The next hearing will be in June for the progress of the court case. I hope I have answered the question but if there is a need to clarify further, I think the Director Capital would add on that.

MR. N. CHETTIAR.- Just to add on, honourable Member, the first initial court case with the contractor was in October. After that, the court said that FNU has made a legal termination. So, now, in terms of securing the bond, we have put the case against the bank which had, at that moment in time, failed to release the bond when FNU had called for it. So the hearing now is at the end of this month with the bank and hopefully, we see how the court will proceed with that matter.

HON. RATU T. NAVURELEVU.- So, that means, Dr. May, the construction will commence soon after the court case?

DR. W. MAY.- Mr. Chairman and honourable Members of the Committee, we do not think so. That would have to be determined by the purpose of the building now if we were to move that forward and repurpose it for whatever the intention and in all other processes of the University that will go through the normal process of the tender board to recall for tenders.

HON. G. VEGNATHAN.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With regard to that question, once again, I know the case is still continuing with regards to the payment. The other part is that the unfinished

work is lying idle for a long time and it does not have a roof over it. I suppose the concrete, et cetera, is exposed and can deteriorate if it is left for too long. That is my thinking, but you do not have to comment on that.

DR. W. MAY.- Mr. Chairman, our Director Capital will be able to answer that question.

MR. N. CHETTIAR.- So, based on the question, I think the honourable Member had alluded to in terms of the start of the project, I think the major intent was on the initial court case which was with the contractor. Initially, we also had COVID-19 restrictions to the North as well so based on the initial comments around recommencement and repurposing of that particular site, we plan to, sort of, really push forward in terms of getting the building completed.

But our aim, as the Acting Vice-Chancellor has mentioned, is based on the current needs and value for money for the University. So, we deem to proceed further in terms of the project as soon as possible. There is a particular internal committee, together with the Management and Council, who are working on the plans to proceed on the project.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Do you have any timeline to complete that project according to your plan as said by Dr. May?

MR. N. CHETTIAR.- Mr. Chairman, that will be based on the discussions that we will have with the various Ministries in terms of how we repurpose the building and hopefully, in the next couple of months, there will be a plan in place in terms of tendering and getting a contractor on board to complete the works.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Just a question on the apprentices. On the table there, we note there is quite a number of organisations that do not have any apprentice being allocated to them. Does that mean that there is availability for apprentices in those organisations and FNU is unable to meet that demand? That is my first question.

On the next table, are those graduates on that total list? There has been no graduates like, for example, carpentry and cook, particularly now, I saw an advertisement that chefs are very much like Australia, offering a very attractive lucrative opportunities there for them and I just note that we have a zero for graduates in that area.

DR. W. MAY.- Mr. Chairman, this is specifically for the NTPC, so I will ask Mr. Alvin Lal to respond to the question that has been raised.

MR. A. LAL.- Mr. Chairman and honourable Members of the Committee, the table portrays the three main Divisions that we are currently training apprentices. For example, Asco Motors have three centres - Central, Western and Northern Divisions. The information or data provided is per Division, so there are eight in the Central Division, three in the Western Division and none in the Northern Division.

This is also demand driven. If the employer wants apprentices to be trained in a particular area and this table shows the number of apprentices in the different locations that they are being trained in.

As for the second table in terms of carpentry, that is the trade that apprentices were trained in in 2020. If you look at the table, particularly your concern is regarding carpentry and cooks, there were none taken up by the industries to be training apprentices in those particular areas.

HON. RATU T. NAVURELEVU.- Mr. Chairman, through you, my question is with regard to Question No. 4 - Apprenticeship Scheme, trade and technical level, Certificate 4 and Diploma Courses which you highlighted in the Report. Are those courses accommodated in all Campuses in Fiji?

DR. W. MAY.- Mr. Chairman, there are two streams for the courses, for example, cookery and the other areas that are listed in here. The first is the pre-service - those who come in from secondary schools or are not at work and coming in to do the programmes for the first time. That is the first stream - the pre-service or fresh school leavers. The second stream which Question No. 4 is actually asking is the in-service cohort that are in the industry or those who are still training. So, there are two different categories and I will ask Mr. Lal to elaborate on the two.

MR. A. LAL.- Thank you, honourable Member. Most of the courses that are conducted by the College of Engineering, Science and Technology and the College of Hospitality, Business and Tourism Studies are being conducted at our Derrick Campus and some of it at our Ba Campus as well. However, majority of the courses are being offered or conducted at the Derrick Campus.

HON. A.T. NAGATA.- Mr. Chairman, my question is also on Question No. 4. Do you have information with regards to the number of apprentices who are currently employed on fulltime basis by the employers listed in that question?

MR. A. LAL.- Thank you, honourable Member, for the question. Most of our apprentices have a good success rate and most of them are being retained by the employers. Some of them are on in-service bond as well so upon completion, they have to serve their time with that particular employer and then they can go and look for other employment opportunities.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, just a question with regards to the trade programmes. I recalled they were taken out to rural communities, like plumbing and some kind of carpentry or electrical programmes, whether that is a standard programme for FNU? From the communities that I visited, they have spoken very highly of that programme and there is a demand, particularly after a cyclone, where they were able to help themselves in the communities with regards to rebuilding their homes.

DR. W. MAY.- Mr. Chairman, yes, the University through the NTPC has got a programme which is the Sustainable Livelihood Programme (SLP). That is the particular arm of the University that carries out those kind of programmes that have been raised today into the communities and those are Government-funded, specifically set aside for the University to do those programmes and run them in the communities.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Do you also do awareness on those programmes?

DR. W. MAY.- Yes, Mr. Chairman. The schedules are sent out in advance by the NTPC for the locations and the different places where the trainees need to go to.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Any data on the number of communities you have to provide the training so far? Maybe, you can provide that later on.

DR. W. MAY.- Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. G. VEGNATHAN.- Mr. Chairman, my question is on Table 1.2.1. - three-storey building at FMA. The construction date started in 1st August, 2018 and it has taken a long time to

complete. One of those factors or challenges you mentioned here is contractor default. Can you explain that, please? Probably, this is the major cause that has led to delay in the completion of the project.

DR. W. MAY.- Mr. Chairman, that is correct, the contract default is one of the main factors. I will ask Director Capital to elaborate on that default. Thank you.

MR. N. CHETTIAR.- Thank you, Mr. Vice Chancellor, thank you honourable Members for the question. Yes, one of the major factors, apart from all the COVID-19 and supply chain issues, was the contract default and slow progress on that particular project. The FNU has taken measures through contractual obligations in terms of carrying out the works. This is another matter that is currently also before the court with one of the contractors, however, we have taken the scope out of the current contractor which was there and FNU is completing the building.

Since April and May, we have actually engaged various subcontracts on this project and we are on the verge of completion now with 85 percent being completed. We expect by August, we should be completing. There may be some supply chain issues at this current state because as we all know, there are issues in the market but now, I think we are proceeding with the work quite fast. Thank you.

HON. A. NAGATA.- Mr. Chairman, this is not a question, it is a commendation. I attended the two finals of the women and men's intercampus volleyball match which was held last night. I must commend, Mr Namosimalua and his team, for a well organised sports activity and also looking after sports corporates. *Vinaka*.

HON. G. VEGNATHAN.- Mr. Chairman, once again, I am coming back to contractors. I can see that with Labasa Campus, we had issues with the contractor. Here, we also see with the FMA building, we have some issues with contractors. Going forward, perhaps FNU would have some plans with regards to the tender process on looking at the contractors that we are going to engage for future projects. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, honourable Vegnathan. Are there any comments Dr. May?

DR. W. MAY.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman and honourable Members of the Committee, that is really a valid comment. The University, in all its tender boards, continuously ask the question, "how we can do this better and do this right and hopefully, get to the perfect process?"

Last week, we had another tender board and the University had proposed a new format of relooking at our process, particularly looking at the sub-analysis of how we choose the contractors, given the process. So, there is going to be a shift and a review of the current process that we used before. From the time this was done, Mr. Chairman and honourable Committee Members, there were few other iterations of the process the Board had to abide by and we are continuously doing that as of last week to try and look at a better system on how else we can do that and also benchmarking against best practice - what other sectors do in this space. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, since there are no other questions, that concludes our meeting today.

On behalf of the Committee, I thank the team from FNU for their appearance here and appreciate the support provided to the Committee in its scrutiny process. Should we have any further

queries, Dr. May, the Secretariat will get in touch with you. Do you have any final comments, Dr May?

DR. W. MAY.- Mr. Chairman and honourable Members of the Committee, I have no further comments but to thank you for the opportunity in helping us to improve our processes - the function in what we were mandated to do for the University as required by the Act and it has been a good experience. Thank you so much.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Dr. May and your team.

Honourable Members, we will now suspend proceedings and resume at 1.00 p.m. to meet with Housing Authority. *Vinaka*.

The Committee adjourned at 12.29 p.m.