



STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE, LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**Consolidated Review Report on the;
Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2016;
Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2016-2017;
Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2017-2018; and
Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2018-2019;**



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
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ACRONYMS

CCCC	Customer Care Call Centre
FMIS	Financial Management Information System
HRMIS	Human Resource Management Information System
HR	Human Resource
MHMS	Ministry of Health and Medical Services
NDP	National Development Plan
OMRS	Open Merit Recruitment and Selection
PSC	Public Service Commission
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TELS	Tertiary Loan Scheme

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CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD



The Ministry of Civil Service was established in 2016 following the abolishment of the Public Service Commission Ministry in December 2015. As intentionally designed, the Ministry of Civil Service was to support Government Ministries in carrying out their constitutional functions whilst maintaining its central coordination of key areas to ensure consistency across the Civil Service.

This Report captures the review findings and recommendations of the Committee with respect to the pertinent issues noted from the contents of the *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2016*, *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2016-2017*, *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2017-2018* and *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2018-2019*.

For the review, the annual reports were partially examined by the previous Committee, which had identified and deliberated on pertinent matters from the Annual Reports. The newly appointed Committee noted the detailed review and unanimously agreed that it continue from where the previous Committee had closed its review. With that, the Committee ensured due diligence by reviewing relevant documents related to the Annual Reports and correspondence communicated internally and externally from the Committee.

Some of the main areas of discussion addressed in this Report are as follows:

- The independence of the Public Service Commission in relation to the establishment of the Ministry of Civil Service;
- The types of complaints handled by Business Unit and Customer Care Call Centre (CCCC) within the Ministry;
- The measures undertaken by the Ministry to reduce its operations cost;
- There were certain financial discrepancies noted in the Ministry's Annual Report for the period 2016 to 2017;
- There were recruitment issues identified with the Ministry of Civil Service, which were noted in the 2017-2018 period;
- The types of 'certification' which had been issued by the Ministry as noted in the 2018-2019 period; and
- The efforts put in place by the Ministry in terms of contributing to the achievement of SDG 5 (promotion of gender equality and empowerment) and SDG 16 (promotion of peace, justice, and strong institutions).

At the conclusion of the review, the Committee believes that majority of the issues identified in the review have been adequately addressed. It also gives credit to the previous Committee members for the tremendous work done and also the Ministry for

collaborating efficiently. The Committee also believes it be prudent to provide the following recommendation for consideration of the Ministry of Civil Service:

1. The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Civil Service provides a timely submission of its annual reports to Parliament for effective and efficient review by Standing Committees.
2. The Committee commends the Ministry for responding to the issues raised by the Committee, which it believes specifies the improvements and progress made, and may likely be noted in the Ministry's next annual report.
3. The Committee recommends that the Ministry continue to build its human resource capacity with an area focused on the gap between new incoming civil servants and civil servant retirees.
4. The Committee recommends that the Ministry implements a policy that should bond graduates to civil service to serve within Fiji.
5. The Committee recommends that the Ministry works with the National Employment Centre to retain experience staff.
6. The Committee recommends that the Ministry strengthens the communication, sharing of information and data across ministries to uplift civil service in all ministries.
7. The Committee recommends that there be certain trainings of civil servants to boost performance and upskilling.
8. The Committee recommends that incentives and benefits are provided to civil servants to prevent mass turnover of staff.
9. The Committee recommends that the Ministry adopts the private sector strategy by working with the universities to align graduates to various employment needs required by relevant Ministries i.e. attachments programmes.
10. The Committee recommends that there be an overall review of the Open Merit Recruitment Selection (OMRS) System across Government Ministries

I would like to acknowledge the Honourable Members of the Justice, Law and Human Rights Committee, Hon Iliesa Vanawalu (Deputy Chairperson), Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua, Hon. Faiyaz Koya and Hon. Mosese Bulitavu, for their deliberations and input and the secretariat for their support.


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HON. RATU RAKUITA VAKALALABURE
Chairperson

COMMITTEE REMIT AND MEMBERS

The Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights ('Committee') is established under Section 70 of the *Constitution of the Republic of Fiji* and Standing Order 109 of the *Standing Orders of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji*. The Committee's mandate and functions are provided under Standing Order 109 (2) and 110 (1) (a)-(d) & (f). The Committee consists of the following Members:



Hon. Ratu Rakuira Vakalalabure
(Chairperson)



Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu
(Deputy Chairperson)



Hon. Mosese Bulitavu
(Member)



Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua
(Member)



Hon. Faiyaz Koya
(Member)

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights ('Committee') of the previous Parliament (2018-2022 Parliament) was referred the *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2016*, *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2016-2017*, *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2017-2018* and *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2018-2019* ('Annual Reports') on Thursday 2 December 2021 pursuant to Standing Order 38 (2) of the Standing Orders of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji. The Committee was mandated to review the Annual Reports and table its finding(s) back to Parliament.

Due to the dissolution of the last Parliament, the Committee had to suspend its work without completing the review.

The Annual Reports were reinstated in the new Parliament (2022-2026 Parliament) and referred to the Committee on 13 February 2023. The Committee inherited the mandate of the previous Committee and took on the responsibility of completing the review.

1.1 Procedure and Programme

The Committee began its review of the Annual Reports on 14 March 2023 with the review process adopted by the Committee was agreed through consensus of the Members, whereby it was resolved to continue from where the previous Committee had ceased. The Committee noted that 3 key stages of the review were completed by the previous Committee, which it believed was sufficient, following careful examination of the documentation on the review stages. These stages are (i) Initial analysis of the annual reports; (ii) Identification of contentious issues and (iii) seeking clarification on issues identified from the Annual Reports.

The Committee continued with the review via the following programme.

i) Review of evidence received from the Ministry of Civil Service

To maintain due diligence, the Committee reviewed all the evidence collected and noted that the issues identified by the previous Committee were sufficiently answered by the Ministry and that there were no other queries to be clarified.

ii) Drafting of Committee Report

The final step of the review process was the compilation of all issues identified from the evidence received. This was then deliberated on and the Committee forms its own independent view on all issues identified. The Committee then compiles a Report which was also reviewed before being finalised for tabling before Parliament.

1.2 Ministry of Civil Service

The Ministry of Civil Service ('Ministry') was established on 1 January 2016 upon the abolishment of the Public Service Commission Ministry in December 2015. The roles and responsibility of the Ministry were to:

- (a) Support the Fijian Government civil service reforms through capacity building;
- (b) Improving overall capability of the civil service; and
- (c) Provide policy advice to Ministries relating to responsibilities of Permanent Secretaries as per section 126 and 127 of the *Constitution*¹;

1.3 Ministry of Civil Service Appropriation

The Ministry as outlined under Head 17 of the Budget Estimates had a notable expenditure to drive the Ministry's operations in achieving its goal. The Committee noted a significant trend in the budget expenditure, which were allocated for the respective years:

- (a) The *Ministry of Civil Service 2016* was allocated an estimated budget of \$5.8M. Due to the change in the financial year, the Ministry only utilized \$1.97M or 33.9% of the actual budget.
- (b) The *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2016-2017* was allocated an estimated budget of \$45.4M and had utilized \$43.4M or 95.5% of the actual budget.
- (c) The *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2017-2018* was allocated an estimated budget of \$69.3M and had utilized \$50.9M or 73.7% of the actual budget.
- (d) The *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2018-2019* was allocated an estimated budget of \$59.7M and had utilized \$43.4M or 97.6% of the actual budget.

The Committee noted that the approved budget for the Ministry had increased for the first three (3) reported periods and even for the fourth reported period, the budget was still substantial. And in these periods, the non-utilised funds were also considerable amounts. The Annual Reports also reflects the operations and administration of the Ministry through the collaborative efforts of its staff and stakeholders in achieving its outcomes for the reported financial years.

¹ *Constitution of the Republic of Fiji.*

2.0 DELIBERATION AND FINDINGS BY THE COMMITTEE

2.1 Deliberation by the Committee

As part of its review process, the Committee read through the review documents from the previous Committee's deliberation and noted that there were a few issues identified, which the Committee reiterates in this report. A summary of these is provided below.

- The Committee enquired about the independence of the Public Service Commission in relation to the establishment of the Ministry of Civil Service.
- There was discussion on what types of complaints were handled by Business Unit and Customer Care Call Centre (CCCC) within the Ministry.
- There was a query on the measures undertaken by the Ministry to reduce its operations cost.
- The Committee noted that there were certain financial discrepancies noted in the Ministry's Annual Reports for the periods 2016 and 2016-2017.
- The Committee noted that there were recruitment issues for the Ministry for the period 2017-2018.
- The Committee queried about the types of 'Certification' issued by the Ministry in the 2018-2019 period.

2.2 Clarification provided by the Ministry

The issues identified were addressed by the Ministry, and a summary of the clarification received is provided below.

In regards to the independence of the Public Service Commission ('PSC'), it was noted that the commission was abolished in December 2015 for the purpose of establishing the Ministry of Civil Service ('Ministry'). With the re-structuring of the Ministry, it was advised that the Ministry took over the core functions of the PSC with some being transferred to other Ministries. The core functions that were adopted by the Ministry were as follows:

- To appoint permanent secretaries with the agreement of the Prime Minister;
- To remove permanent secretaries with the agreement of the Prime Minister;
- To institute the disciplinary action against permanent secretaries; and
- To make such other appointments and perform such other duties, functions and responsibilities as may be prescribed by written law.

The Committee was also advised that in addition to the core functions, the Ministry will be responsible for providing guidelines for use across Ministries such as the Open Merit Based Recruitment and Selection Guideline and administering the Procedural Review Process and Performance Assessment Framework that encompasses the monitoring of the core deliverables of the permanent secretaries.

In terms of the Miscellaneous Revenue status of the Ministry highlighted in the 2016 Annual Report, the Committee was advised that there was no proper handover done on the financial report, which consisted of receipts of Quarters rental and funds from the Territory Loan Scheme (TELS). It was also advised that the financial operations conducted at the time were the sole responsibility of the PSC in which the Ministry of Civil Service, as a result could not furnish the financial records to the Auditors for vetting.

Additionally, in terms of the financial report, the Committee was advised that the Ministry has taken preventive and detection measures to achieve the unqualified opinion of the auditor's report for the subsequent years in which the following was adopted by the Ministry:

- Establishment of effective internal controls;
- Frequent discussion amongst staff are held to identify risks;
- Internal audit risk assessment were held twice a year by Risk Assessment Committee in order to identify potential risks;
- Easy Accessibility of policies and procedures to employees to ensure accuracy of finance and accounting and purposely reduce the risk of financial harm; and
- Capacity building offered to staff to ensure that they are well equipped with the required knowledge to carry out their duties and also be aware of channels for reporting suspected improprieties.

The Committee noted that salaries of Doctors that are employed by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services ('MHMS'), had come under the administration of the Ministry through the budget passed by Parliament. As part of its accountability process, the Ministry had worked collaboratively with the MHMS in addressing customer satisfaction through the Customer Care Call Centre (CCCC), which is based at the MHMS. In light of the complaints handled by the MHMS, the Ministry had classified these complaints into 17 categories. The Committee was also advised that for unresolved complaints received by the Ministry for the period 2016-2017; these were directed to the MHMS for quick response.

In regards to the strategies undertaken by the Ministry to reduce its operations cost for 2016-2017 without impacting the service delivery, it was advised that the Ministry had introduced online systems and software programmes, such as the FMIS which streamlines the day-to-day functions of the Ministry as well as to improve accountability and its financial internal control systems. The Committee was further advised that HRMIS has enabled the Ministry to better manage its staff and also streamlined its work by condensing some of the HR core works into the online system. This has enabled higher levels of transparency for staff whom had re-focused their work on other activities such as records management. The Committee also noted that the Ministry had outsourced some of its operations to improve efficiency and cost reduction by engaging a security company rather than employing security guards individually.

In terms of the financial query highlighted in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, the Committee was advised that the total state revenue received by the Ministry were proceeds retained as commission, which were from the collection of non-statutory deduction from lending and hire purchase institution that were engaged by staff. The Committee was clarified that the commission collected were paid back to the Ministry for assisting companies in the collection of revenue and also assisting the staff in paying their dues to these financial institutions.

In regards to the challenges of recruitments of doctors faced by MHMS, the Committee noted that the Ministry was approved to recruit 968 doctors for 2017-2018 financial year. However, only 70 per cent of 968 approved position were employed which had resulted in savings of \$17.4M from the 285 vacant positions allocated under the 'Established Staff'. The Committee was advised that the Ministry had adopted an approach to address the difficulty in recruitment of doctors, and this the Ministry has undertaken the following HR activities;

- Career paths were clarified and recruitment activities were undertaken to ensure that medical officers were retained, through the OMRS, at higher levels.
- Learning and Development opportunities were identified.
- Locum Doctors were engaged.
- In addition to local recruitment, wider recruitment strategies were used – utilizing social media to bring the opportunities to the notice of doctors internationally.

In terms of the issues noted from the 2018-2019 report, the Committee noted that the Ministry had issued a total of 1,206 certificates as part of its service. The Committee sought clarification on the types of 'certification' approved by the Ministry and was advised that as per approval by the then Permanent Secretary, the Ministry were certifying the authenticity of documents that were brought in by clients, which included exam results, transcripts and births, deaths and marriage certificates.

As part of the review process, the Committee ventured on to other issues and noted additional questions that were also submitted for clarification. The Ministry responded to the questions sent, in which a summary of the correspondence is highlighted as follows.

The Committee noted that the Ministry had faced a common issue of tabling its Annual Reports on time which have occurred over the four (4) consecutive years. The Committee was advised that the delay for tabling was mainly due to change in Permanent Secretary of the Ministry in 2019 in which all the existing reports were then compiled and submitted to cabinet.

In terms of strengthening capacity building of staff, the Committee was advised that the Ministry has certain programmes available that helps in the upskilling of employees in which staff are nominated to undergo training. These programmes were as follows;

- OMRS Guideline;
- Discipline Guideline;
- Effective Job Application and Interview;
- Effective Performance Management;
- Assessing and Discussing Performance;
- Occupational, Health and Safety;
- First Aid;
- Protocol Training for Trainers Workshop;
- Fire Warden Training; and
- Quality Circle Innovation.

Additionally to capacity building and training, the Committee was also advised that the Ministry follows the Fijian Civil Service Learning and Development Guideline in identifying individuals and their development needs through performance assessment of staff.

In terms of the National Development Plan (NDP), the Committee was advised that the Ministry has been promoting gender equality through the establishment of policies and legislation which is to support equal opportunity of employment across the civil service. For the purpose of monitoring and evaluating the progress of the gender equality, the Committee was advised that the Ministry had cascaded its promotion on women in development through the Ministry's Annual Work plan to key Performance indicators of every employee which ensures that Ministry achieves its goal holistically.

Written copy of the issues and clarification documents are uploaded along with this Report onto the Parliament website: www.parliament.gov.fj.

2.3 Sustainable Development Goals impact analysis

As part of its review, the Committee is also mindful of the requirements of the Standing Orders of Parliament whereby all matters before the Committee are to be reviewed through a gender lens. This is supplemented by the Committee's appreciation of the Parliament's role in contributing towards the Global Agenda, which Fiji is also committed to.

From the review it was noted that the Ministry specifically contributes to SDG 5 and SDG 16 and is committed to the implementation of gender-neutral and non-discriminatory policies by establishing a merit based and fair recruitment system for the Fijian Civil Service regardless of gender. It was encouraging to note that in 2017-2018, women made up 59% of the Ministry's workforce, which increased to 71% in 2018-2019.

2.4 Key Findings

At the last few stages of the review; after extensive deliberation of all the evidence received and noted from the response of the *Ministry of Civil Service*, the Committee has identified a few pertinent findings, which it believes are worth noting and a summary of these is provided as follows:

- i) The Ministry has re-strategized its efforts to address unresolved complaints from the public.
- ii) The Ministry has also introduced strategical methods of reducing its cost of operation by re-aligning its Human Resource and financial system.
- iii) The Ministry has put emphasis on improving staff work-related capabilities by increasing capacity building programmes.
- iv) The Ministry has made significant strides in accomplishing its goal towards SDG 5 and SDG 16 with the introduction of certain policies.
- v) The Ministry has made a notable transition from the Public Service Commission to the Ministry of Civil Service by continuing the core functions of PSC in issuing standard guidelines across Government Ministries.
- vi) Given the Open Merit-Recruitment System, the Ministry has made significant strides in its efforts towards gender equality by achieving 59% of female representation.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

After extensive deliberation, the Committee noted that the Ministry of Civil Service has some significant highlights within the reported years. In addition, the Committee had met with the current Permanent Secretary for Civil Service and discussed measures that the Ministry has undertaken to improve service delivery. Following this discussion, the Committee also believes that it would be prudent to put forth certain recommendations for consideration by the Ministry, which are as follows:

1. The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Civil Service provides a timely submission of its annual reports to Parliament for effective and efficient review by Standing Committees.
2. The Committee commends the Ministry for responding to the issues raised by the Committee, which it believes specifies the improvements and progress made, and may likely be noted in the Ministry's next annual report.
3. The Committee recommends that the Ministry continue to build its human resource capacity with an area focused on the gap between new incoming civil servants and civil servant retirees.
4. The Committee recommends that the Ministry implements a policy that should bond graduates to civil service to serve within Fiji.
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9. The Committee recommends that the Ministry adopts the private sector strategy by working with the universities to align graduates to various employment needs required by relevant Ministries i.e. attachments programmes.
10. The Committee recommends that there be an overall review of the Open Merit Recruitment Selection (OMRS) across Government Ministries.

4.0 CONCLUSION

After reviewing the *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2016*, *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2016-2017*, *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2017-2018* and *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2018-2019*, the Committee recommends that the House takes note of its contents.

The Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights has fulfilled its mandate approved by Parliament, which is to examine and review the *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Reports* with due diligence.

The Committee's review highlighted numerous findings, which are reflected in this Report. The Committee also put forth a few recommendations for consideration of the Ministry of Civil Service.

The Committee through this report commends the *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2016*, *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2016-2017*, *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2017-2018* and *Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2018-2019* and the contents of its Report to the Parliament.

MEMBER'S SIGNATURES



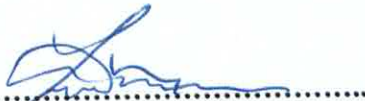
Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure
(Chairperson)



Hon. Ilesia Vanawalu
(Deputy Chairperson)



Hon. Faiyaz Koya
(Member)



Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua
(Member)



Hon. Mosese Bulitavu
(Member)

DATE: 15/07/23