



MINISTRY OF CIVIL SERVICE

Reference: MCS 13/3

Date: 4 July 2022

Hon. Rohit Ritesh Sharma
Deputy Chairperson
Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights
Parliament of the Republic of Fiji
Suva

Dear Hon. Sharma

RE: Clarification on Issues Identified on the Ministry of Civil Service Annual Reports 2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019

1. We refer to your letter dated 17 June 2022 in regards to the Clarification on Issues Identified on the Ministry of Civil Service Annual Reports 2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019.
2. Enclosed please find our response and clarifications for the issues identified.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Susan Kiran'.

Susan Kiran (Ms)
Permanent Secretary for Civil Service

Clarifications on Issues Identified from the Ministry of Civil Service Annual Reports

A. Issues Identified from the Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2016

1. Clarification is sought on the use of the term 'Ministry' to describe the Public Service Commission (PSC); given that the Committee is of the understanding that the PSC is an independent statutory organisation?

In 2013 the Public Service Commission (PSC) underwent restructuring to re-align its work activities to the respective provisions of the Fijian Constitution. In accordance with Section 126(1) of the 2013 Constitution, the Public Service Commission has the following functions:

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

The Public Service Commission Ministry was abolished on from 31 December 2015, and Ministry of Civil Service was established on 1 January 2016. Some continuing functions were moved to different Ministries, along with the relevant staff. These functions included Office Accommodation which now sits in the Construction Implementation Unit, and Insurance which sits within Treasury. Grant administration and management of assistance for tertiary education in the form of scholarships and loans have now been outsourced to a Tertiary Scholarship and Loans Service (TSLS).

In addition to its constitutional functions, the Public Service Commission is responsible for setting consistent service standards across the Fijian Civil Service including issuing guidelines 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. The Public Service Commission is supported by the PSC Secretariat which sits within the Ministry of Civil Service.

The Ministry of Civil Service took over the function of providing support to Ministries to carry out their Constitutional responsibilities while maintaining central coordination of key areas to ensure consistency across the Civil Service.

2. Can the Ministry elaborate on what was the miscellaneous revenue received by the Ministry as stated in page 12?

The Miscellaneous revenue in 2016 financial report consists of the receipt of quarters' rental and funds from the Territory Education Loan Scheme (TELS) which was the responsibility of the PSC Ministry at the time. There were no handover reports and records from PSC to Ministry of Civil Service and therefore MCS was unable to furnish records to the auditors.

B. Issues identified from the Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2016-2017

1. In regard to the complaints handled by the Business Unit and the Customer Care Call Centre ('CCCC'), as noted in page 9; clarification is sought on the following;

(i) What kind of complaints are received by CCCC and what types of complaints they are allowed to handle/address?

Since the establishment of the feedback contact centre, the following feedback categories registered in 2017 have been:

- Delays and long waiting times
- General Enquiry
- Medicines and other supplies not available
- Unsatisfactory treatment
- Poor staff attitudes/ behaviour
- Service too expensive
- Positive feedback
- Medicines or other supplies not available
- Equipment not available or not working
- Poor/ Inadequate/ Missing Reports and Records
- Environmental health
- No Response
- Poor communication
- Customer hang up
- Treatment area unpleasant

(ii) Is there proper disaggregated data (or a register) on the complaints system, which is facilitated by the Business Unit and CCCC for the reported period?

Attached as Annex 1 is the Feedback Call Centre Report from 2017 to 2021 and register for 2017.

(iii) What actions were taken in regards to unresolved complaints?

Concerns about unresolved pending tickets were forwarded directly to the Ministry of Health and Medical Services for quick action and response.

2. As on note 7 of the Financial Statement (page 23) what were the strategies in reducing the operation costs and how did the Ministry ensure that service delivery is not affected?

Online systems and software programmes were introduced to streamline the day-to-day functions of the Ministry. FMIS introduced internal control systems to improve accountability in our finance tasks.

HRMIS provides an opportunity to better manage staff establishment, and HR functions such as leave and performance assessment were undertaken through this system which streamlined the work of staff and allowed for higher levels of transparency. Staff who were

focused on leave management were able to refocus their work on other activities such as records management. The HRMIS also allowed for the electronic storage of contracts and other employee documentation, as permitted by the system. Outsourcing was also carried out to improve efficiency – the Ministry engaged a company to provide security service at the Centre for Training and Development complex instead of employing individual security guards.

3. Can the Ministry elaborate on what was the total state Revenue Received by the Ministry, as stated in Page 16?

The revenue stated on page 17 is retained as commission for the collection of non-Statutory deduction for several organisations (including but not limited to Wesram Finance, Subrail Furniture, Vinod Patel) other lending institution and hire purchase institutions that were engaged by staff.

C. Issues identified from the Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2017-2018

1. Clarification is sought on what the Total State Revenue received by the Ministry entails, i.e. where did the revenue stated on page 17 of the Report come from and please provide specific details on these?

Similar to 2017-2017, the state revenue came from the Commission collected from the Non Statutory deduction in the payroll, such as Wesram Finance, Vinod Patel, Subrail Furniture and etc. This is the commission that is paid back to Ministry for assisting the Companies in collecting revenue and also assisting the staff in paying their payment to financiers.

2. In regard to the explanatory note (Note 5) to the ‘Significant Savings’ captured in the Financial Statement of the reported period, clarification is sought on what the Ministry has done to address the difficulty in recruitment?

To manage the doctor shortage at the time the Ministry undertook 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 – utilising social media to bring the opportunities to the notice of doctors internationally.

D. Issues identified from the Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report 2018-2019

1. Clarification is sort on the type of 'Certification' which are issued by the Ministry, as stated in table on page 17?

The Ministry was certifying the authenticity of documents brought by the clients, as permitted. These included exam results, transcripts and BDM certificates. This was the practice approved by the PS at the time.

E. General Questions

1. What was the cause of delay for tabling of the Ministry's Annual Reports to Parliament? Please provide details of reasons for each reported year.

The delay was due to the change in permanent secretary of the Ministry in 2019, following which all reports were then compiled and submitted as quickly as possible.

2. In terms of the training/capacity building: clarification is sought on the following;

(i) Does the Ministry conduct such programmes for its own staff?

Yes, the staff of the Ministry of Civil Service have access to these programmes and are regularly nominated to undergo training in the following areas:

- 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.

(ii) What are the processes followed by the Ministry in identifying the officers from the Ministry to undertake training/capacity building programmes?

The Ministry of Civil Service adheres to the process in the Fijian Civil Service Learning and Development Guideline which is outlined below:

Individual learning and development needs were identified through completion of the Learning and Development Plan in the MyAPA, or MyPROBA, through skills gaps identified in a formal performance improvement programme, and organisational need.

3. In regards to the qualified opinion noted from the Auditor’s Report on the Ministry’s Financial Statement in 2016 (noted in Page 9): what measures did the Ministry put in place to ensure that the audit opinions for the subsequent years, were unqualified.

Preventive and Detection controls were put in place:

- A strong internal control system was put in place. To accommodate the development of an internal control system, a set of policies and SOPs were developed to set the tone for how employees engage in their day-to-day activities.
- Monthly meetings were held with Heads of Departments and Ministry staff to discuss MCS-related risk issues. Heads of Departments held monthly meetings with the PS, and the PS also met monthly with the staff.
- Internal audit risk assessments were performed twice a year by a Risk Assessment Committee and OHS Committee in order to identify potential risks.
- Individual Departments and Units were asked to submit monthly reviews of individual performance reports as well as monthly progress reports for the Unit.
- Policies and procedures were documented and made available to employees to ensure the accuracy of finance and accounting, the protection of business assets, accountability, and the prevention of errors, risks, frauds, and other potential financial and reputational harm.
- Staff received appropriate training and guidance such as Orientation Training, Leadership Training, Health & Safety Trainings, Technical skills development, Skills Development Trainings and on the job trainings on creating a positive work environment to ensure that they have the knowledge required to carry out their duties, that they receive an appropriate level of direction and supervision, and that they are aware of the proper channels for reporting suspected improprieties.

F. NDP/SDGs related Questions

1. Can the Ministry specify, if it’s possible to do so, which goal from the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) does the Ministry work contribute to?

The Ministry specifically contributes to Goal 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions.

One of the Ministry’s ongoing responsibilities is to ensure the consistent and robust implementation of PSC approved policies and guidelines which are benchmarked to international best practice to ensure a transparent, accountable and efficient civil service.

Through the implementation of the OMRS policy in particular, the Ministry also contributes towards Goal 5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. By ensuring a merit based, fair recruitment system for the Fijian Civil Service.

2. In terms of implementing the recruitment policy (OMRS) into Ministry: clarification is sought on how this policy has opened up the Ministry to an inclusive work-place that offers equal opportunity for All persons?

The application of open merit-based recruitment and selection policies requires adherence to the following Principles:

- Decision making based only on the requirements of the position, with no assumption on who will possess these requirements; and

- Open and transparent competition for all positions.

The implementation of the OMRS and the aforementioned principles allows for fair decision making, allowing for the engagement of candidates who have the relevant skills, knowledge, experience and abilities to the position regardless of gender, socioeconomic background or disability.

The OMRS has allowed for equal opportunity recruitment and the Ministry of Civil Service has become a more inclusive work place because of it.

The OMRS eliminates prejudice and nepotism in the recruitment of staff which builds the trust of staff and potential employees which contributes to the government's overall organizational effectiveness and productivity.

- 3. In terms of the plans put in place by the Fijian Government, as provided in the 5-year and 20-year National Development Plan (NDP); clarification is sought on what the Ministry has done for the periods 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, in terms of reviewing legislation, policies and plans as per the National Gender Policy and revising the aforementioned to ensure gender is promoted?**

Women in Development

The Ministry has adhered to the necessary policies and legislations as required.

The principles outlined in the Guidelines and policies approved by the PSC for implementation across the Civil Service support equal opportunity employment.

In 2017 – 2019, the Ministry ensured compliance with the above policies and furthermore, that, in line with international best practice, recruitment, learning and development and career development opportunities were offered in a fair, transparent and equitable manner.

In 2017-2018 women made up 59% of the Ministry's workforce, and this increased to 71% in 2018-2019.

- 4. In terms of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework of the Ministry; clarification is sought on whether the Ministry follows the M& E framework prescribed in the NDP, as to how it monitors the Ministry's output for a financial year?**

The Ministry of Civil Service has a Strategic Plan, an Annual Costed Operational Plan, and all units have their unit business plans which then cascades to individual work plans. Reporting is done against the Costed Operational Plan and the Permanent Secretary is provided with an indication of whether targets have been met, and staff performance was aligned to set KPIs.