



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI

MINUTES

of Proceedings of Parliament at Suva on Monday, Eleventh day of September,
2023

1. The House met at 10.00 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

2. Hon. Speaker took the Chair and read the Prayer.

3. MEMBERS PRESENT

All Honourable Members were present except for the Hon. Ratu Josaia Niudamu.

4. ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OR AFFIRMATION

Mr Taito Rokomatu took the Oath of Office for Members of Parliament and the Oath of Allegiance, and also delivered his maiden speech.

5. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Leader of the Government in Parliament the Hon. Lynda Tabuya moved that the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Friday, 14 July 2023 as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

Motion seconded.

Question put.

Motion agreed to unanimously.

6. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

Hon. Speaker welcomed all Honourable Members to the sitting, those seated in the gallery and those watching the live proceedings on television and the internet.

Hon. Speaker also informed the Honourable Members on the back-to-office reports that were available in the Library for the Honourable Members' perusal and reference –

- (a) 146th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly in Manama, Bahrain;
- (b) Visit of the Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs and Defence to the Guangdong Province in China;
- (c) Vanuatu Parliamentary Induction; and
- (d) 3rd Pacific Islands Parliaments Group 2023 Conference.

Hon. Speaker informed that he had received evidence from the Hon. Parveen Bala and that the evidence would be further reviewed and assessed before he addressed the House in the course of the sitting week.

7. PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS

The following reports were tabled and referred accordingly to the relevant Standing Committees –

- (a) Standing Committee on Social Affairs
 - (i) Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts Annual Report 2018–2019;
 - (ii) Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts Annual Report 2019–2020; and
 - (iii) Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts Annual Report 2020–2021.
- (b) Standing Committee on Economic Affairs
 - (i) Fiji Meat Industry Board Annual Report 2019;
 - (ii) Fiji Meat Industry Board Annual Report 2020;
 - (iii) Accident Compensation Commission Fiji Annual Report 2020; and
 - (iv) Accident Compensation Commission Fiji Annual Report 2021.
- (c) Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights
 - (i) The Electoral Commission Annual Report 2022.
- (d) Standing Committee on Natural Resources
 - (i) Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources Annual Report 2020–2021;
 - (ii) Water Authority of Fiji Annual Report January to July 2018; and
 - (iii) Water Authority of Fiji Annual Report 2018–2019.

8. PRESENTATION OF REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Social Affairs

- (a) The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs the Hon. Alitia Bainivalu tabled the annual review of the Ministry of Youth and Sports Annual Report 2019-2020.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs moved a motion without notice pursuant to Standing Order 121(5) that a debate on the content of the report is initiated at a future sitting. The motion was seconded and agreed to unanimously.

- (b) The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs the Hon. Alitia Bainivalu tabled the review of the Fiji Sports Council August 2017 to July 2018 Annual Report.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs moved a motion without notice pursuant to Standing Order 121(5) that a debate on the content of the report is initiated at a future sitting. The motion was seconded and agreed to unanimously.

9. MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

- (a) The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Climate Change, Environment, Civil Service, Information, Public Enterprises and Veteran Affairs the Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka delivered a Ministerial Statement. The Hon. Faiyaz Koya subsequently responded.
- (b) The Minister for Education the Hon. Aseri Radrodro delivered a Ministerial Statement. The Hon. Premila Kumar subsequently responded.

Hon. Speaker ruled that the motion by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition on the Order Paper would be omitted given that the Hon. Prime Minister had delivered a Ministerial Statement on the same subject matter.

10. QUESTIONS

Urgent Oral Question

Hon. Inia Seruiratu asked the Minister for Health and Medical Services – A few people as reported have fallen sick and seven unfortunately have died in the general areas of Balevuto, Nukuloa, Nacaci and Toge, Ba due to water-borne infections – Can the Minister explain the immediate response Government has carried out and future plans to address the plight of these communities in their water project.

Oral Questions

- 89/2023 Hon. Ratu Josaia Niudamu to ask the Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Culture, Heritage and Arts – Can the Minister inform Parliament if there are plans by the Ministry to resolve the ongoing provincial boundary disputes between the two provinces of Ba and Ra.

- 90/2023 Hon. Jovesa Vocea asked the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Climate Change, Environment, Civil Service, Information, Public Enterprises and Veteran Affairs – Can the Prime Minister update Parliament on the current arrangement on housing eligibility for Civil Servants.
- 91/2023 Hon. Sachida Nand asked the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics – Can the Deputy Prime Minister update Parliament on the request made by him during the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting on the proposed visa-free travel for Fijians to New Zealand and Australia.
- 92/2023 Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna asked the Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport – Can the Minister update Parliament on the Ministry’s work plan on the extension of sealing works on roads in Vanua Levu, Ovalau, Taveuni and Kadavu.
- 93/2023 Hon. Faiyaz Koya asked the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation – Due to the recent increase in the Departure Tax and VAT on tourism related products and services, can the Deputy Prime Minister explain how the Government plans to alleviate the potential burden on local communities and businesses.
- 94/2023 Hon. Sashi Kiran asked the Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport – Can the Minister inform Parliament on Government’s plans to ensure the supply, harvest and use of clean water in rural and remote areas where regular piped water supply is not available.
- 95/2023 Hon. Viam Pillay asked the Minister for Multi-Ethnic Affairs and Sugar Industry – With the recent increase in VAT and other taxes that has raised concerns among sugarcane farmers who are already facing numerous challenges, can the Minister inform Parliament if an assessment has been conducted to gauge the potential negative impact of these tax hikes on sugarcane farmers.
- 96/22023 Hon. Esrom Immanuel asked the Minister for Education – Can the Minister inform Parliament on the plans to include specialised religious education teachers in its remuneration and recognition programmes, considering the important role they play in promoting religious and moral education in our school.

Written Questions

- 97/2023 Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure asked the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Climate Change, Environment, Civil Service, Information, Public Enterprises and Veteran Affairs – Can the Prime Minister update Parliament on the number of Civil Servants that are currently on study leave overseas –
- (a) how many are on study leave with pay and how many are on study leave without pay; and

- (b) how many have had their contracts terminated whilst on study leave between 2014 to 2022.

98/2023

Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua asked the Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources – Can the Minister inform Parliament on the grant of state land lease for the period 2014 to 2022 for the following–

- (c) the number of applicants being issued Notice of Approval of Lease;
- (d) the number of proper leases issued upon these Notice of Approval of Lease;
- (e) the cause of delay in processing proper leases pending Notice of Approval of Lease;
- (f) what are being taken to accelerate this process for the purpose of ease of doing business and in boosting our resource based sectors; and
- (g) the number of leases being declined (if any) upon the issuance of Notice of Approval of Lease and the reasons for the same.

99/2023

Hon. Hem Chand asked the Minister for Education – As a result of the shortage of qualified teachers in the Early Childhood Education, Primary Schools and Special Needs Schools, can the Minister provide the following information to Parliament –

- (a) total roll of schools for the current year;
- (b) provide statistics on the number of teachers required per school;
- (c) number of teachers that resigned; and
- (d) number of vacancies for Early Childhood Education, Primary Schools and Special Needs Schools.

100/2023

Hon. Alipate Tuicolo asked the Minister for Youth and Sports – With the establishment of the Fiji National Sports Commission Act 2013, can the Minister provide the following –

- (a) how many Communities Sports Associations have been registered with the Fiji National Sports Commission to date;
- (b) how many Communities Sports Associations are currently active or non-active to date in the Rural, Maritime, Urban and Peri-urban areas;
- (c) will the Fiji National Sports Commission be introducing any new sports to these communities and will these sports

continue to promote equality and inclusivity regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religious backgrounds, and physical abilities; and

- (d) do the community sports outreach programmes cover all four Divisions.

101/2023 Hon. Jone Usamate asked the Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport – Can the Minister provide the following –

- (a) a detailed breakdown of the list of projects and programmes that will be implemented to utilise the budget of Water Authority of Fiji for 2023 to 2024; and
- (b) the targeted cost of each programme and project, together with planned completion dates.

The Hon. Speaker delivered his ruling on the Urgent Oral Question and allowed the Hon. Leader of the Opposition to ask his urgent oral question, which was responded to by the Hon. Minister for Health and Medical Services. Pursuant to Standing Order 43(3), Oral Question 89/2023 was omitted from the Order Paper. The responses to the Oral and Supplementary Questions were provided by the respective Ministers.

The responses to the Written Questions would be submitted by the respective Ministers in accordance with Standing Order 45(3). The Hon. Minister for Education tabled his response to Written Question 99/2023. The Hon. Minister for Youth and Sports tabled his response to Written Question 100/2023.

11. CONSIDERATION OF BILLS

- (i) The Hon. Attorney-General and Minister for Justice the Hon. Siromi Turaga moved a motion pursuant to Standing Order 51 –
 - (a) That the High Court (Amendment) Bill 2023 be considered by Parliament without delay;
 - (b) That the Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
 - (c) That the Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament; and
 - (d) That the Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 14 September 2023, but that 1 hour be given to debate the Bill, with the right of reply given to him as the Member moving the motion.

Motion seconded.

Motion debated.

Question put.

Votes Cast –

Yes	–	29
No	–	25
Not Voted	–	1

Motion agreed to.

(ii) The Hon. Attorney-General and Minister for Justice the Hon. Siromi Turaga moved a motion pursuant to Standing Order 51 –

- (a) That the Local Government (Amendment) Bill 2023 be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) That the Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) That the Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament; and
- (d) That the Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 14 September 2023, but that 1 hour be given to debate the Bill, with the right of reply given to him as the Member moving the motion.

Motion seconded.

Motion debated.

Question put.

Motion agreed to unanimously.

(iii) The Hon. Attorney-General and Minister for Justice the Hon. Siromi Turaga moved a motion pursuant to Standing Order 51 –

- (a) That the Drainage (Amendment) Bill 2023 be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) That the Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) That the Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament; and
- (d) That the Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 14 September 2023, but that 1 hour be given to debate the Bill, with the right of reply given to him as the Member moving the motion.

Motion seconded.

Motion debated.

Question put.

Votes Cast –

Yes	–	29
No	–	25
Not Voted	–	1

Motion agreed to.

12. SUSPENSION MOTION BY THE LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT

The Leader of the Government in Parliament the Hon. Lynda Tabuya moved under Standing Order 6 that so much of Standing Order 23(1) be suspended so as to allow the House to sit beyond 4.30 p.m. to complete the remaining items listed on the Order Paper.

Motion seconded.

Motion debated.

Question put.

Motion agreed to unanimously.

13. CONSIDERATION OF BILLS

(iv) The Hon. Attorney-General and Minister for Justice the Hon. Siromi Turaga moved a motion pursuant to Standing Order 51 –

- (a) That the State Lands (Amendments) Bill 2023 be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) That the Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) That the Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament; and
- (d) That the Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 14 September 2023, but that 1 hour be given to debate the Bill, with the right of reply given to him as the Member moving the motion.

Motion seconded.

Motion debated.

Question put.

Votes Cast –

Yes	–	29
No	–	25
Not Voted	–	1

Motion agreed to.

(v) The Hon. Attorney-General and Minister for Justice the Hon. Siromi Turaga moved a motion pursuant to Standing Order 51 –

- (a) That the Higher Salaries Commission Bill 2023 be considered by Parliament without delay;

- (b) That the Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) That the Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament; and
- (d) That the Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 14 September 2023, but that 1 hour be given to debate the Bill, with the right of reply given to him as the Member moving the motion.

Motion seconded.

Motion debated.

Question put.

Votes Cast –

Yes	–	29
No	–	25
Not Voted	–	1

Motion agreed to.

14. MOTIONS FOR DEBATE

- (i) The Chairperson of the Emoluments Committee the Hon. Lynda Tabuya moved that in addition to the resolution of Parliament on Wednesday, 12 July 2023, Parliament approves that the Emoluments Committee –
 - (a) reviews the salaries, allowances and benefits of the Members of Parliament, President and Speaker as provided for under the Parliamentary Remunerations Act 2014;
 - (b) reviews the Parliamentary Retirement Allowances Act 1989; and
 - (c) must report back to Parliament at a later sitting.

Motion seconded.

Motion debated.

Question put.

Motion agreed to unanimously.

- (ii) The Leader of the Government in Parliament the Hon. Lynda Tabuya moved –
 - (a) That Parliament adopts the following amendment to Part B of the Schedule to the Parliamentary Remunerations Act 2014, for the following positions –
 - (i) Prime Minister
“11. Parliamentary duty allowance – \$10,000 per annum (Not taxable).”

- (ii) Cabinet Ministers
“9. Parliamentary duty allowance – \$10,000 per annum (Not taxable).”
 - (iii) Assistant Ministers
“9. Parliamentary duty allowance – \$10,000 per annum (Not taxable).”
 - (iv) Leader of the Opposition
“9. Parliamentary duty allowance – \$10,000 per annum (Not taxable).”
 - (v) Members of Parliament (including Deputy Speaker, Government/Opposition Whip and Leader of the Government in Parliament and excluding the Prime Minister, Ministers, Speaker and the Leader of Opposition)
“7. Parliamentary duty allowance – \$10,000 per annum (Not taxable).”
- (b) That the amendments to Part B of the Schedule to the Parliamentary Remunerations Act 2014 be adopted as an amendment to the Determination pursuant to section 3 of the Parliamentary Remunerations Act 2014; and
- (c) That this amendment to the Determination to take effect from 1 August 2023 and expire on 31 December 2026.

Motion seconded.

Motion debated.

Question put.

Votes Cast –

Yes	–	29
No	–	25
Not Voted	–	1

Motion agreed to.

- (iii) The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence the Hon. Viliame Naupoto moved that Parliament debates the ‘Review of the Fiji Police Force Annual Report August 2018 – July 2019’ which was tabled on 27 March 2023.

Motion seconded.

Motion debated.

Question put.

Motion agreed to unanimously.

- (iv) The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs the Hon. Alitia Bainivalu moved that Parliament debates the 'Review of the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji 2020 Annual Report' which was tabled on 29 March 2023.

Motion seconded.

Motion debated.

Question put.

Motion agreed to unanimously.

15. ADJOURNMENT

The Hon. Speaker thanked all Honourable Members for their contributions and adjourned Parliament until Tuesday, 12 September 2023 at 9.30 a.m.

Parliament adjourned at 8.51 p.m.

Speaker of Parliament

Secretary-General to Parliament

11th September, 2023.