

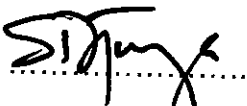
**Hon. Attorney-General and Minister for Justice response to written question 62/2024**

1. 62/2024 Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua to ask the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice - **Can the Minister inform Parliament on -**
  - (a) the names of all the Justices of the Peace; and
  - (b) their physical addresses by District, Province and Division as at 31 March 2024.
2. I thank the Hon. Qereqeretabua for the question and accordingly provide my response herein.
3. The Justices of the Peace (JPs) play an important role in maintaining the fabric of our judicial system, acting as accessible representatives of justice within our communities.
4. Their duties range from certifying documents to witnessing affidavits, ensuring that justice is not only served but also seen to be served in everyday interactions.
5. Before December 2022, there were 483 JPs and we are pleased to announce that this number has increased to 596 as of today.
6. This is a testament to the Ministry of Justice's (Ministry) ongoing efforts to ensure that justice is accessible to everyone.
7. Last year, the Ministry received a total of 83 applications from individuals that were interested to become JPs.
8. This year, from January to April alone, the Ministry received 26 applications in total. Of these, 19 were shortlisted for interviews on Thursday 23 May 2024 in the Central/Eastern Division.
9. This shows a continued interest and commitment from the general public to contribute to the justice system.
10. However, we must acknowledge a significant gap in our history and address the challenges encountered.
11. From 2018 to 2021, there was a lapse in the oath ceremonies, and no new JPs were appointed during this period.

12. Since the Coalition Government assumed office, the Ministry had appointed 113 new JPs within just one year.
13. This is a remarkable achievement and a step forward in strengthening our justice system.
14. Workshops for Commissioners of Oath and JP were conducted annually until 2019.
15. Unfortunately, these workshops were halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
16. However, plans are in place to resume these workshops in the next financial year or later this year.
17. These workshops are important in ensuring that JPs are well-trained and fully understand their roles and responsibilities.
18. Despite these positive developments, the Ministry still face several challenges.
19. One major issue is the lack of regular workshops, leading to some JPs being unfamiliar with their roles and not adhering to the necessary requirements.
20. For instance, there was an incident where a JP certified his own documents, clearly violating the rules.
21. This highlights the urgent need for continuous education and training.
22. Another significant challenge is the shortage of JPs in rural areas. In maritime islands, in particular the Lomaiviti Group, we received 11 JP applications from Gau, Nairai, and Batiki.
23. Villagers in these areas often have to travel long distances to find a JP to certify their documents, which has been a persistent issue for the past 16 years.
24. To address this, during my ministerial visits, I have included a representative from the JP Unit to educate and inform villagers on how they can become JPs.
25. This initiative aims to increase the number of JPs in rural areas and make justice more accessible to everyone.
26. We also recognize the importance of continuous improvement. To this end, we are exploring ways to leverage technology and streamline processes to make the work of JPs more efficient.

27. We are considering implementing online training modules and certification processes to ensure that JPs are well-equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills.
28. Moreover, we are working on establishing a more robust support system for JPs. This includes setting up regional offices where JPs can seek guidance and assistance.
29. We believe that by providing more resources and support, we can help JPs perform their duties more effectively.
30. While we have made significant strides in increasing the number of JPs and addressing some of the challenges, there is still much work to be done.
31. We remain committed to ensuring that all citizens, regardless of where they live, have access to justice. I thank you all for your dedication and support in this endeavor.

Thank you.



Siromi Turaga

Attorney-General and Minister of Justice

24.5.24