



STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE

Consolidated Review Report of the Savusavu Town Council 2014 and 2015 Annual Reports



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
Parliamentary Paper No. 53 of 2025

April-May 2025
Published and Printed by the Department of Legislature, Parliament House, SUVA

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Acronyms

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EFL	- Energy Fiji Limited
MHMS	- Ministry of Health and Medical Services
SCFAD	- Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence
SDG	- Sustainable Development Goals
SO	- Standing Order

Chairperson's Foreword

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence (SCFAD) hereby submits to Parliament the Consolidated Review Report on the 2014 and 2015 Annual Reports of the Savusavu Town Council.

Municipal Councils in Fiji operate under the Local Government Act 1972 and are mandated to provide essential services and facilities to their ratepayers through sound policy direction. In recent years, Special Administrators, along with their Chairs and administrative teams, have been entrusted with transforming these Councils into modern, agile, and customer-focused organisations. This transformation is guided by each municipality's unique characteristics, be they related to lifestyle, demographics, or economic potential and is supported by robust Community Plans and Local Economic Development Strategies.

The Savusavu Town Council (the Council) is responsible for delivering a broad range of municipal services to an estimated population of 6,000 residents within the greater Savusavu area.

In line with the Committee's oversight responsibilities, the Council was initially scheduled to present its public submission at the Commissioner Northern's Conference Room on Thursday, 10 April 2025. However, the Committee expressed its disappointment at the inadequate attendance of invited Council officials at that session. Consequently, the Committee unanimously resolved to extend a second invitation to the Council's Chief Executive Officer and Special Administrators. The rescheduled public submission was successfully conducted at the Parliament Precinct on Wednesday, 24 April 2025.

The Committee acknowledges and appreciates the Council's efforts in compiling and submitting its Annual Reports for 2014 and 2015. This Consolidated Review Report highlights key trends observed during the reporting period and presents 14 actionable recommendations for consideration.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence for their collaborative and bipartisan contributions to this report. I also thank the Committee Secretariat for their invaluable support throughout the review process.

On behalf of the Committee, I respectfully submit this report to Parliament.

... 

Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua
Chairperson

Recommendations

- 1.0 The Committee recommends that the Council further strengthen its rates collection strategy by expanding legal enforcement, community engagement programs, and digital payment options to sustain and exceed the 71% collection rate achieved in recent years (*reference to point 3.3.1*).
- 2.0 The Committee recommends that Energy Fiji Limited (EFL) prioritize consistent participation in local stakeholder meetings, particularly in developing towns like Savusavu, to ensure coordinated planning and alignment with local development goals. Additionally, EFL should review its cost-recovery model for three-phase transformer installations and explore subsidized or partnership-based approaches to reduce the financial burden on residents and businesses. Strengthening collaboration with town councils will enhance infrastructure readiness, encourage investment, and support inclusive economic growth (*reference to point 3.3.2*).
- 3.0 The Committee recommends that the Council prioritize the establishment of a proper, environmentally compliant landfill facility to ensure effective and sustainable solid waste management (*reference to point 3.3.3*).
- 4.0 The Committee recommends that the Council initiate planning and secure funding for a centralized sewerage treatment plant to replace reliance on septic tanks and address ongoing health and environmental risks (*reference to point 3.3.4*).
- 5.0 The Committee recommends that the Council collaborate with relevant national authorities to upgrade local airport and transport infrastructure to support economic and tourism development (*reference to point 3.3.5*).
- 6.0 The Committee recommends that the Council works in partnership with law enforcement to implement community policing, introduce drug rehabilitation initiatives, and fast-track public surveillance projects to enhance public safety (*reference to point 3.3.6*).
- 7.0 The Committee recommends that the Council conduct a comprehensive traffic and mobility study and proceed with the installation of parking meters to generate more revenue (*reference to point 3.3.7*).
- 8.0 The Committee recommends that the matter of historical financial mismanagement, including unrecorded land deposits and improper land sales, be referred to the relevant authorities for investigation (*reference to point 3.3.8*).

- 9.0 The Committee recommends that the Council develop a formal asset management policy, including maintenance schedules and funding provisions, to ensure the effective use and longevity of all municipal equipment and infrastructure (*reference to point 3.3.9*).
- 10.0 The Committee recommends that the Council expedite the town boundary expansion process in accordance with legal procedures to increase its ratepayer base and enable comprehensive urban development planning (*reference to point 3.3.10*).
- 11.0 The Committee recommends that the Council proceed with the installation of CCTV cameras across key locations in the CBD in coordination with Fiji Police and the Fiji Roads Authority to improve monitoring and public safety (*reference to point 3.3.11*).
- 12.0 The Committee recommends that the Council establish a clear governance structure for managing the *NaVualiku* Project in line with the World Bank's requirements and ensure alignment with the broader Tourism Master Plan (*reference to point 3.3.12*).
- 13.0 The Committee recommends that the Council seek public-private partnerships or government grants to fund the redevelopment of Ratu Ganilau Park into a modern sports complex that serves both local communities and visiting athletes (*reference to point 3.3.13*).
- 14.0 The Committee recommends that the Council implement beautification initiatives through the employment of town beauticians and move forward with coastal protection projects to address erosion and build environmental resilience (*reference to point 3.3.14*).

1.0 Committee Remit and Composition

Under Standing Order 109(2)(e) the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence is mandated to look into matters related to Fiji's relations with other countries, development aid, foreign direct investment, oversight of the military, and relations with multi-lateral organizations. The members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence are as follows:



Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua
Chairperson

Deputy Speaker of Parliament
Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs



Hon. Rinesh Sharma
Deputy Chairperson



Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu
Member

Assistant Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Heritage and Arts



Hon. Penioni Ravunawa
Member

Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services



Hon. Virendra Lal
Member

1.1 Committee Secretariat Team

Supporting the Committee in its work is a group of dedicated Parliament Officers serving as the Committee Secretariat. These officers are appointed and delegated by the Secretary-General to Parliament by Standing Order 15(3)(i). The Secretariat officers are as follows:

- Mrs. Susana Korovou – Senior Committee Clerk
- Mrs. Elesi Tabuyaqona – Deputy Committee Clerk

2.0 Background and Terms of Reference

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence (the Committee), was referred the Savusavu Town Council 2014 and 2015 Annual Reports on 14 March 2025. The referral of these Annual Reports were done in accordance with SO 38(2), whereby the Committee was assigned to investigate the contents of the report and provide a report to Parliament at a future Sitting. This report is outside the usual mandate of the Committee, but the referral was made to help ease the workload of the other Standing Committees.

2.1 Procedure and Program

Oral or Written Evidence Received

Pursuant to Standing Order 112(1)(c), the Committee had initially scheduled the Savusavu Town Council's public submission to be held at the Commissioner Northern's Conference Room on Thursday, 10 April 2025. However, the Committee expressed disappointment regarding the poor turnout of the invited officials at the scheduled session.

As a result, the Committee unanimously agreed to extend a second invitation to the Chief Executive Officer and Special Administrators of the Savusavu Town Council. The subsequent public submission was scheduled at the Parliament Precinct on Wednesday, 24 April 2025.

A summary of the submission is provided in a later part of this report, under the heading 'Committee's Deliberation and Analysis'. Copies of the written submission and the verbatim from the meeting can be obtained from the online Appendices of this report, which can be accessed from the Parliament website: www.parliament.gov.fj.

3.0 Committee Deliberation and Analysis

3.1 Introduction

The Municipal Councils in Fiji are legislated under the Local Government Act 1972. The Municipal Councils provide overall policy direction to maintain and improve the quality of services and facilities for their ratepayers. The Special Administrator, Chairs and Teams for each Municipal Council have been tasked with reforming their Council administrations into forward thinking and agile organisations focused on customer service. Each of our cities and towns are unique in their quality of lifestyle and range of investment opportunities and over time each Council will be guided by a Community Plan and Local Economic Development Strategy.

The Savusavu Town Council (Council) serves an estimated population of 6,000 in the greater Savusavu area and is responsible for the provision and maintenance of a wide range of services to its ratepayers and residents. The Council aims to achieve the following:

- Facilitating access to the basic services needed for a healthy and safe life;
- Promoting an attractive and healthy environment for work and leisure;
- Encouraging sustainable development which brings continuing prosperity;
- Delivering the statutory responsibility of local government; and
- Encouraging the people of Savusavu to contribute to the decisions about their town/community works and the developments.

The Council provides the following services:

1.0 Town Boundary Area

- 1.1 Garbage Collections;
- 1.2 Maintenance of roadsides mainly through grass cutting and drainage cleaning;
- 1.3 Clean-up campaign; and
- 1.4 Landfill for discarding of rubbish.

2.0 Main Town Area

- 2.1 Provision and maintenance of toilet facilities;
- 2.2 Provision and maintenance of market facilities; and
- 2.3 Provision and maintenance of civic amenities including taxi, carrier and bus stand base.

3.0 Other Services provided by the Council are:

- 3.1 Maintenance of sporting facilities, in particular, Ratu Ganilau Park and Narayans Park;
- 3.2 Conducts building inspections;
- 3.3 Process and approves building plans; and

3.4 Conducts food surveillance by the Health Inspector around business houses in town to ensure proper and safe trading of processed foods and items.

3.2 Summary of the Savusavu Town Council 2014 and 2015 Annual Reports

3.2.1 Financial Snapshots

In 2014, the Council reported a loss of \$101,269. However, this was followed by a turnaround in 2015, with a reported profit of \$107,884. The Council's primary sources of income were town rates and rental properties, while the main expenditure areas included salaries and wages, administrative and operational costs, and maintenance expenses. Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of total income, total expenses, and net profit for the years 2014 and 2015.

Year	Total Comprehensive Income	Total Comprehensive Expenses	Total Comprehensive Profit/Loss
2014	\$696,337.00	\$797,606.00	(\$101,269.00)
2015	\$849,940.00	\$742,056.00	\$107,884.00

Table 1: Total Comprehensive Profit attained during the financial periods from 2014 and 2015

The Council highlighted that town rates are one of the highest income sources for the Council. For the years under review, the Council reported that:

	2015	2014
Total Levy	\$355,837.35	\$355,837.35
Arrears as at 31 st December 2014	\$153,915.91	\$105,343.71
Arrears Town Rate Collected as at 2015/2013	\$34,972.79	\$305,547.91
Percent Collected	23%	29%
Current Town Rate Collected 2015	\$254,115.90	\$252,683.19
Percent collected	71%	71%

The Council reported that actions have been undertaken against defaulting ratepayers.

The actions taken included the following:

- a) Deduction at source
- b) Arrangements
- c) 7 days demand notice
- d) 14 days demand notice
- e) 21 days demand notice
- f) Data bureau registration
- g) Atonement of leases given to the tenants
- h) Lodging of Fiji Charge (caveat) on land
- i) Summons through Small Claims Tribunal
- j) House to house rates collections

3.2.2 Building, Health and Environment

3.2.2.1 Building Development Control

Any building or rebuilding activities including internal renovations require development permission through the respective Municipal Councils and the Department of Town & Country Planning. During the review period, the Council recorded a total of 92 building applications in 2015, an increase from 70 applications received in 2014.

3.2.2.2 Food Control

During the review period, the Council maintained its food surveillance activities by monitoring all food establishments to ensure compliance with the Food Safety Act. These inspections were carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS).

3.2.2.3 Waste Management

The Council continued to promote waste minimization and environmental protection through its established waste management system. Garbage collection in the Savusavu area is carried out three times per week, while quarterly clean-up campaigns are organized to manage backyard waste. Additionally, special waste collection services are available upon request, subject to the payment of applicable fees.

3.2.2.4 Environment Sustainability

During the review period, the Council reported that rising sea levels in 2014 had adversely affected the coastline, resulting in foreshore damage along Nakama Creek. In response, a joint dogo-tree planting initiative was undertaken, involving school students, Council staff, and laborers. To further mitigate environmental impact, the Council implemented drainage upgrade works aimed at preventing erosion and preserving surrounding vegetation. In 2015, the Council sustained its environmental efforts through a foreshore clean-up program and the continued development of drainage infrastructure.

3.2.3 Projects

The Council undertook a number of projects in 2014 and 2015. Table 3 shows the list of projects that the Council implemented during the years under review:

	2014	2015
Market extension	- The Council was involved in the extension of the fish market that accommodated 26 freezer spaces and areas for vegetable and root crop vendors.	- This project continued in 2015.
Dump Upgrading	- The Council in consultation with the Ministry of Environment had upgraded	- This project continued in 2015.

	dump sites to resolve complaints from households.	
Foreshore beautification project	- Promotion of Green town program	- Construction of footpaths at Narrains Height. - Construction of 600meters Health Board Walk.
Parcel sellers shed	- Construction of building to accommodate 36 women parcel sellers.	- This project continued in 2015. -

Table 2: Summary of a list of on-going projects and proposed projects from 2011 to 2013

3.3 Committee Findings

The Committee during its review process identified the following issues:

3.3.1 Town Rates Collection

Historically, the Council has struggled with low rates collection, recording just 29% in 2014 and 23% in 2015. However, recent initiatives have improved collection to 71%. These efforts include community engagement, legal enforcement, and the promotion of amnesty programs, which have helped rebuild trust with ratepayers.

3.3.2 Stakeholder Meetings

The Committee was informed that Energy Fiji Limited (EFL), despite being a critical infrastructure stakeholder, has not consistently participated in local stakeholder meetings. This lack of engagement has resulted in planning gaps and delayed responses to power-related infrastructure needs, particularly in Savusavu town boundary area. A key concern raised was EFL's practice of requiring businesses and residents to bear the full cost of installing three-phase power transformers, costs which, in some cases, have exceeded FJD \$50,000. Such financial burdens are seen as a barrier to investment and equitable development. The Committee noted that EFL's absence from these planning discussions may be contributing to a disconnect between local development objectives and the timely provision of power infrastructure, ultimately hindering economic growth and the well-being of communities.

3.3.3 Improper Landfill Management

Solid waste disposal remains a major concern due to the absence of a proper landfill. This has led to improper waste handling, with the lack of infrastructure significantly hindering effective solid waste management.

3.3.4 Sewerage Treatment and Wastewater Management

Savusavu currently relies heavily on septic tanks, lacking a dedicated sewerage treatment facility. This poses significant health and environmental risks, and upgrading to a centralized wastewater system is crucial for sustainable development.

3.3.5 Airports and Transport Infrastructure

Air connectivity and supporting infrastructure require upgrades to improve accessibility and support tourism growth. The current state of facilities is inadequate for the town's development goals.

3.3.6 Drug-Related Issues

An increase in drug-related activities has raised safety concerns. The town needs stronger community policing, rehabilitation programs, and surveillance systems to address the issue.

3.3.7 Service Lanes and Parking

The town faces ongoing issues with insufficient service lanes and the absence of organized parking facilities. This has led to traffic congestion, particularly in the CBD area. The implementation of parking meters and structured parking zones is being considered.

3.3.8 Accountability, Governance and Historical Financial Mismanagement

The Committee expressed deep concerns over the Council's past financial practices. Between 2011 and 2015, Savusavu Town Council failed to maintain proper records, used a single general account for all transactions, and lacked structured accounting systems. This resulted in unaudited and unsupported financial statements, mismanagement of land deposits, and questionable land sales, including one major land parcel sold for \$350,000, which is now worth over \$7 million.

Members of the Committee have called for investigations by the relevant authorities for investigation and accountability from former administrators. It was noted that proper accounting reforms began only around 2019, with the implementation of MYOB software and internal financial controls.

3.3.9 Equipment and Asset Management Issues

The Committee also raised concerns regarding assets such as a compactor truck donated by the Japanese embassy in 2015, which has remained unused for nearly a decade due to repair costs and lack of funds. This reflects a broader issue of poor asset management and planning, which the Council must address moving forward.

3.3.10 Town Expansion and Urban Planning

The Savusavu Town Council is pursuing the expansion of its current municipal boundary in an effort to boost its ratepayer base, which currently comprises only 644 individuals. This strategic move is intended to not only increase revenue collection but also facilitate comprehensive urban planning and infrastructure development to support the town's long-term growth.

3.3.11 Surveillance and Public Safety Initiatives

To enhance public safety and deter criminal activity, the Council is working in collaboration with the Fiji Police Force and the Fiji Roads Authority to conduct a joint survey on the installation of CCTV cameras. These cameras will be placed throughout key

locations within the Central Business District (CBD), particularly in areas identified as high-risk. The project aims to create a safer environment for residents, businesses, and visitors.

3.3.12 Tourism Development Projects

The NaVualiku Project, launched in partnership with the World Bank, forms part of a broader Tourism Master Plan to unlock the full potential of Savusavu's tourism industry. This initiative focuses on enhancing infrastructure, protecting natural assets, and developing tourism-related services. The overarching goal is to position Savusavu as a premier sustainable tourism destination in the Pacific region.

3.3.13 Sports and Recreation Facilities

Plans are underway to transform Ratu Ganilau Park into a state-of-the-art sports facility. This redevelopment is aimed at promoting youth participation in sports, hosting community events, and attracting sports tourism. The project reflects the Council's commitment to health, community engagement, and local economic development.

3.3.14 Beautification and Environmental Sustainability

As part of its environmental and urban enhancement efforts, the Council intends to employ town beauticians tasked with maintaining and upgrading public spaces and greenery. In parallel, coastal protection initiatives are being developed to address the growing threat of erosion and sea-level rise. These measures aim to preserve the town's natural beauty while promoting long-term environmental resilience.

4.0 Sustainable Development Goals

The Parliament of Fiji Standing Orders 110 (2) requires the Committee to give full consideration to the principle of gender equality to ensure all matters are considered about the impact and benefit on both men and women. Provided below is a breakdown of the key SDGs aligned with the Council's initiatives:

1. SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being
 - Provision and maintenance of toilet facilities
 - Food surveillance for safety compliance
 - Clean-up campaigns and garbage collection
 - Drainage improvements to reduce health risks from flooding and stagnant water
2. SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
 - Drainage construction and maintenance
 - Improved waste management systems
 - Provision of public sanitation facilities
3. SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
 - Encouraging local economic development strategies
 - Extension of market facilities to support vendors
 - Construction of sheds for 36 women parcel sellers (supporting informal economy)
4. SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
 - Upgrading dumpsites
 - Construction of footpaths and boardwalks
 - Building inspections and plan approvals (urban development control)
5. SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
 - Foreshore beautification and clean-up projects
 - Urban infrastructure services such as public markets, civic amenities, and sports parks
 - Promotion of a green town and climate resilience
7. SDG 13: Climate Action
 - Foreshore erosion mitigation and drainage upgrades
 - Tree planting in response to sea-level rise
 - Awareness and resilience-building through school and community involvement

5.0 Conclusion

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence has conducted a thorough review of the Savusavu Town Council 2014 and 2015 Annual Reports. The Committee report is bi-partisan and has 14 recommendations for consideration.

6.0 Committee Members' Signatures



Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua
Chairperson



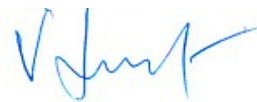
Hon. Rinesh Sharma
Deputy Chairperson



Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu
Member



Hon. Penioni Ravunawa
Member



Hon. Virendra Lal
Member

7.0 Annexure

Published evidence

Written evidence, transcripts, and supporting documents can be viewed on the Parliament website at the following link:

<https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-foreign-affairs-and-defence/>