



STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Consolidated Review Report of the Water Authority of Fiji Jan – July 2018 and 2018 – 2019 Annual Report



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
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Chair's Foreword



As the Chair of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, I am pleased to present the Committee's consolidated report on two Annual Reports of the Water Authority of Fiji, that cover the period from Jan – July 2018 and 2018 - 2019. Through these annual reports, we gain valuable insights into the various activities and achievements of the Authority during the review period.

As part of our ongoing commitment to promoting transparency and accountability in the management of public resources, the Committee has undertaken a thorough examination of WAF's performance during this period.

The Water Authority of Fiji plays a vital role in ensuring the delivery of safe, reliable, and sustainable water and wastewater services to the people of Fiji. In the face of significant challenges, including climate change, rapid urbanization, and the need for infrastructure upgrades, WAF has made notable strides in its efforts to meet the growing demand for water services across the country.

Throughout our review, the Committee focused on assessing the Authority's operational effectiveness, financial management, and progress towards meeting its strategic objectives. Our scrutiny included site visits to WAF's operational areas in various divisions of Fiji, where we engaged with both staff and local communities to understand the impacts of WAF's initiatives firsthand.

While acknowledging the achievements made by WAF, the Committee has also identified areas for improvement. The Committee believes that with continued focus on efficiency, innovation, and sustainable practices, WAF can strengthen its role as a key pillar in Fiji's development.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend WAF for its commitment to its mission, and I hope this report will serve as a constructive contribution to its ongoing efforts to provide safe, accessible, and sustainable water services to all Fijians.

I take this opportunity to thank Hon. Taito Rokomatu (Deputy Chairperson), Hon. Isikeli Tuiwailevu, Hon. Kalaveti Ravu, Hon. Sachida Nand and Hon. Virendra Lal (alternate) Member for the compilation of this bipartisan report.

I commend this Report to Parliament.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tomasi Tunabuna'.

.....
Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna
Chairperson

ACRONYMS

NRW	Non – Revenue Water
SO	Standing Order of Parliament
WAF	Water Authority of Fiji
WAD	Water and Sewerage Department

Overall Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Natural Resources has reviewed the Water Authority of Fiji Jan – July 2018 and 2018 – 2019 Annual Reports and recommends that Parliament take note of its recommendations as stated in the report.

1.0 Introduction

The Water Authority of Fiji Annual Reports for Jan – July 2018 and 2018 – 2019 were referred to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, according to Standing Order 38 (2), by Parliament on Wednesday 11th September 2023.

The following Standing Orders of Parliament specify the role of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

- 1) **SO109 (c)** that the mandate of the Committee is to investigate matters that relate to agriculture, forests, fisheries, land, minerals, environment, water, and marine services.
- 2) **SO110 (1) (c)** further authorizes the Standing Committee to scrutinize the government departments with responsibility within the committee's subject area, including by investigating, inquiring into, and making recommendations relating to any aspect of such a department's administration, legislation or proposed legislative, program, rationalization, restructuring functioning, organization structure, and policy formulation.

The Committee undertook a comprehensive review of the Water Authority of Fiji's (WAF) Annual Report for the financial year 2018-2019, as part of its mandate to ensure transparency, accountability, and effective management of public resources. The scrutiny focused on the operational performance, financial management, and strategic initiatives undertaken by WAF during this period. As part of this process, the Committee conducted a site visit to WAF's operational areas across Fiji, engaging with key stakeholders to assess the authority's progress and identify any challenges faced in delivering quality water and sanitation services to the public. This review aims to provide an objective assessment of WAF's achievements, challenges, and the overall impact of its initiatives in line with its mission to ensure a sustainable water supply for the people of Fiji.

2.0 Background

The Water Authority of Fiji is responsible for the provision of water supply and wastewater services across Fiji. In the 2018-2019 period, WAF focused on addressing increasing demand for water and improving infrastructure, while navigating challenges such as climate change and population growth. Key initiatives included upgrading water treatment plants, extending water networks, and enhancing wastewater management systems. The authority also prioritized water conservation, leak reduction, and customer engagement, aiming to ensure sustainable and reliable services for all Fijians. Despite these efforts, WAF continued to face challenges in delivering its services across diverse and remote communities.

2.1 Key Responsibilities of WAF

The key responsibilities of WAF, as noted by the Committee, include the following;

- 2.1.1 Water Supply:** WAF ensures the supply of potable water to the population across Fiji. This includes the management of water sources, treatment plants, and distribution networks.
- 2.1.2 Wastewater Services:** The authority manages the collection, treatment, and safe disposal of wastewater to protect public health and the environment.
- 2.1.3 Infrastructure Development:** WAF is tasked with the development of infrastructure such as water treatment plants, sewage treatment plants, reservoirs, pipelines, and other related facilities.
- 2.1.4 Sustainability Initiatives:** As part of its efforts to provide reliable and sustainable water services, WAF works on water conservation projects and ensures the protection of water sources.
- 2.1.5 Customer Service:** The Authority is focused on improving customer service by enhancing the billing systems, addressing customer concerns, and improving the overall service delivery.

2.2 Total Workforce

The Committee noted that WAF employed a diverse team across its operations, including technical staff, administrative employees, field workers and customer service personnel. The total number of staff members typically ranged from several hundred to over a thousand, depending on the size of the operations and specific needs at the time.

2.3 Committee Remit and Composition

The Parliament *Standing Order 109 2 (c)* mandates the Standing Committee on Natural Resources to look into matters that relate to forestry, agriculture, mining, environment, fisheries, water and marine services.

2.3.1 Committee Membership:



Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna
Chairperson
Assistant Minister for Agriculture



Hon. Taito Rokomatu
Deputy Chairperson
Opposition MP



Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu
Assistant Minister for iTaukei Affairs
Government MP



Hon. Kalaveti Ravu
Government MP



Hon. Sachida Nand
Opposition MP

2.4 Procedure and Program

The Committee commenced by undertaking a review of the Water Authority of Fiji Jan – July and 2018 and 2018 – 2019 Annual Reports. It then broadened its focus by covering the other two Reports.

The Committee met with the executives of the Water Authority of Fiji on 27th November 2024 to discuss their responses to questions regarding the overall operations. A separate meeting was also held with representatives from the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA), Telecom Fiji, and Energy Fiji Limited (EFL). The purpose of this meeting was for the Committee to gain a better understanding of how these utility services coordinate infrastructure projects to ensure that roadworks, telecommunications, water, and energy services are aligned and scheduled to minimize disruptions.

Copies of written and oral submissions were received from the Water Authority of Fiji.

A 5-day site visit to the Central, Western, and Northern divisions of WAF was conducted from Monday, 18th November to Friday, 22nd November 2024. The visit aimed to provide insights into the challenges faced by the Authority, assess the achievement of targeted programs, identify issues encountered by the divisions, and evaluate the overall performance of WAF during the review period.

A draft report was prepared following the site visit during the week of Monday, 17th November 2024. During the compilation of the report, additional clarifications were sought from WAF whereby responses were gathered and noted by the Committee. The Committee's report outlined key findings, identified challenges faced and the mitigation measures taken, reviewed budget utilization, assessed the gender perspective, examined relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how they are being addressed, and proposed several recommendations.

2.0 Committee Deliberations and Analysis

2.1 Overall WAF Performance

The Water Authority of Fiji plays a crucial role in ensuring that Fijians have access to safe, clean drinking water and effective wastewater management services. With its focus on sustainability, infrastructure development, and customer service, WAF continues to work towards meeting the evolving needs of the population and adapting to the challenges posed by climate change and population growth.

The Committee noted that the Annual report for the review period contained necessary information about the work carried out by WAF. However, it was noted that the report did not provide the targets for the activities completed during this period.

Overall, despite the challenges faced, the performance of the Water Authority of Fiji during the review period was deemed satisfactory.

2.2 2018 HIGHLIGHTS

The Committed took note of some of the highlights of WAF achieved in 2018 and 2019 as listed below:

- WAF staff quickly restored the water supply after Tropical Cyclones Josie and Keni in April, which caused \$3.5 million in damage to WAF's infrastructure.
- The emergency water shutdown at Nagado in June was necessary to remove a defective Polyjet valve. If not addressed promptly, it could have caused catastrophic structural damage and a complete shutdown, leaving thousands of Fijians without water supply for up to two months.
- The completion of the Kiuva water main pipe replacement improved infrastructure capacity and sustainability, ensuring a better supply of clean and safe water for 900 residents.
- Non-Revenue Water (NRW) reduced to an all-time low of 29.3% in Quarter 2, 2018 from 52.2% in Quarter 3 2013 when WAF National NRW calculation started.
- The completion of a 650-meter under-sea pipeline connecting Vio Island to the Authority's Lautoka Depot provides the island's 230 residents with improved and more consistent access to water supply.

2.2.1 CAPITAL PROJECT COMPLETION

- Pipe Laying - Nadi Airport ATS to Fiji Airways Hanger and Tokatoka to Neelfield Road
- Pipe Extension - Nadi Bay Road (1,702m) Denarau Extension, Denarau Bypass - Phase 1 (1,800m) 150mm Newtown Road (1,490m) Ramsami to Vauyalewa extension)
- Pipe Replacement 600mm DICL Mains Upgrading from Lal Singh Road to Rewa Bridge Four-miles Nabua bridge sewer line replacement

2.3 Summary of the Committee Findings for WAF 2018-2019 Annual Report.

The Committee reviewed the WAF Annual Report for the 2018-2019 period and highlighted several key findings regarding WAF's performance, challenges, and future priorities. Below is a summary of the committee's findings

2.3.1 Reporting and Financial Transparency Issues

- Data Discrepancies: The Committee noted that WAF's reports for January to July 2018 and 2018-2019 included data from 2021 and 2022, raising concerns about the accuracy and relevance of reported figures.

- Delayed Action on Audit Recommendations: WAF took 11 years to act on the Auditor General's report regarding the Opening Balance of Property, Plant, and Equipment in 2010, indicating long delays in addressing financial matters.

2.3.2 Governance and Leadership

- Gender Inequality in Leadership: The Committee observed that WAF did not subscribe to gender equality in its executive positions, pointing to a need for improved gender balance at all levels as appropriate levels.
- Non-Diverse Board: The Committee highlighted that the Board membership was non-diverse.

2.3.3 Infrastructure and Service Delivery Challenges

- Aging Infrastructure: WAF's aging infrastructure was a concern, with the Committee noting that this could lead to inefficiencies, higher costs, and service disruptions.
- Access to Water in Rural and Peri-Urban Areas: The Committee pointed out that many rural and peri-urban areas still lacked consistent access to potable water, underlining the need for expansion to improve public health and support rural development.
- Water Scarcity and Climate Change: Climate change could exacerbate water scarcity and result in droughts. The Committee emphasized the importance of educating the public on water conservation to ensure long-term water availability.
- Service Disruptions Due to Extreme Weather: The Committee recognized the frequent disruptions in water and wastewater services caused by extreme weather events and climate change, stressing the need for resilience.

2.3.4 Operational Efficiency

- Non-Revenue Water (NRW): The Committee noted that NRW represents lost revenue and inefficient water use. Addressing this issue could improve operational efficiency and revenue generation.
- Customer Service: The Committee emphasized that exceptional customer service is vital for building trust and satisfaction. Efficient handling of complaints and inquiries is critical for maintaining positive relationships with consumers.

2.3.5 ...Workforce and Training

- Skilled Workforce Needs: The Committee noted that there was a lack in skilled workforce that was essential to maintain service quality and adoption of new technologies. Regular training is crucial to equip employees with the necessary knowledge to tackle evolving challenges.

2.3.6...Environmental and Collaborative Initiatives

- Protection of Water Resources: The Committee highlighted the need to protect water resources from over-exploitation and pollution, especially in the context of climate change.

- **Collaboration for Improvement:** The Committee recommended that WAF seek collaborations to access capital, expertise, and innovative solutions to improve service delivery in a cost-effective manner.

2.3.7 Public Engagement and Awareness

- **Public Education on Water Conservation:** The Committee noted that a well-informed public is more likely to support water conservation efforts and initiatives aimed at protecting the environment.

2.3.8 Issues Raised by WAF

- **Annual Reports Submission:** WAF assured the Committee that the Annual Reports for 2019-2022 had been submitted and were awaiting approval from the line Ministry.
- **Liquid Trade Waste Fines:** WAF informed the Committee that while Parliament approved the power to issue fines for Liquid Trade Waste infringements in July 2022, it was still awaiting appropriate legislation from the line Ministry to enforce these powers.

2.3.9 Specific Issues Raised by the Committee

- **Saru Water Treatment Plant: Lautoka.** The Committee noted that the disagreement between the landowner in Abaca village was the reason for the incomplete connection of water pipes from the source to the water treatment plant.
- **Vehicles for Daily Operations:** WAF informed the Committee of the need for additional vehicles to carry out its daily operations.
- **Methane Use at Kinoya Wastewater Treatment Plant:** The Committee was informed that WAF is working on using methane at the Kinoya Wastewater Treatment Plant to generate energy for EFL

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

Based on the key findings outlined above, the Committee has made the following recommendations for the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) to address the identified challenges and enhance its overall operations:

RECOMMENDATION 1

1. Financial and Reporting Transparency

- *Address Data Discrepancies:* The Committee recommends that WAF improve its reporting accuracy and ensure that future reports include up-to-date and relevant figures, particularly avoiding the inclusion of outdated data from subsequent years.

- *Timely Action on Audit Recommendations:* The Committee recommends that WAF implement a systematic process to address audit recommendations promptly and not delay actions, especially on financial matters such as the Opening Balance of Property, Plant, and Equipment. WAF should aim to clear outstanding audit issues within the specified timeframe.

2. Governance and Leadership

- *Promote Gender Equality:* The Committee strongly recommends that WAF take immediate action to promote gender equality as appropriate.
- *Increase Board Diversity:* The Committee recommends that WAF review its **Board** composition to ensure greater diversity, which will enhance decision-making processes.

3. Infrastructure and Service Delivery

- *Address Aging Infrastructure:* WAF should prioritize the upgrading and renewal of aging infrastructure.
- *Expand Access to Rural and Peri-Urban Areas:* The Committee recommends that WAF focus on expanding water supply infrastructure to rural and peri-urban areas to ensure consistent access to treated water.
- *Plan for Water Scarcity and Climate Change:* The Committee recommends that WAF develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to address water scarcity caused by climate change.

4. Operational Efficiency

- *Reduce Non-Revenue Water (NRW):* The Committee urges WAF to focus on reducing NRW by improving leak detection, addressing illegal connections, and upgrading metering systems.
- *Enhance Customer Service:* The Committee recommends that WAF continue to enhance its customer service by ensuring the efficient handling of complaints and providing timely responses to inquiries.

5. Workforce Development

- *Invest in Workforce Training:* The Committee emphasizes the need for WAF to invest in regular staff training to ensure employees are equipped with the necessary skills to tackle evolving challenges, adopt new technologies, and maintain high service standards.
- *Address Staffing Gaps:* The Committee recommends that WAF address its staffing shortages in collaboration with technical institutions.

6. Environmental Sustainability

- *Protect Water Resources:* The Committee urges WAF to adopt a more proactive approach to protecting water resources from pollution and over-exploitation, particularly in the face of climate change.
- *Promote Sustainable Practices:* WAF should lead initiatives that promote sustainable water usage and environmental conservation, aligning its goals with broader national objectives for climate resilience and environmental protection.

7. Collaboration and Innovation

- *Foster Partnerships and Collaboration:* The Committee recommends that WAF explore collaborations with other organizations, both locally and internationally, to access necessary capital, expertise, and innovative solutions.
- *Leverage Technology for Operational Improvements:* The Committee recommends that WAF invest in new technologies.

8. Public Engagement and Education

- *Public Education on Water Conservation:* The Committee recommends that WAF expand its public education programs to raise awareness about water conservation and the importance of responsible water use.
- *Community Engagement:* WAF should also strengthen its efforts to engage with local communities through consultations, feedback mechanisms, and public forums.

9. Specific Project Follow-ups

- *Address Delays in Kubulau Water System:* The Committee requests that WAF provide detailed updates and a clear timeline for the completion of the water system project in Kubulau, Bua.
- *Namau Water Catchment Project:* The Committee recommends that WAF finalise its commitment towards the landowners.
- *Saru Water Treatment Plant Issues:* The Committee recommends that WAF honours its commitment to the LOUs.

10. Legal and Regulatory Powers

- *Empower WAF to Enforce Liquid Trade Waste Fines:* The Committee recommends that the Ministry expedite its enactment of relevant legislation to enable appropriate enforcement by WAF.

4.0 Gender Analysis

SO 110 (2) states that *“Where a Committee conducts an activity listed in clause (1) the Committee shall ensure that full consideration will be given to the principle of gender equality to ensure all matters are considered with regard to the impact and benefit on both men and women equally”.*

In recent years, WAF has likely made efforts to diversify its workforce, promoting gender equality and creating an inclusive workplace. This might include increasing the number of women in traditionally male-dominated roles, such as engineering and fieldwork.

The Committee acknowledges the efforts made by the WAF during the 2018-2019 review period to promote gender equality within the organization and in its service delivery.

The Committee encourages WAF to continue its work towards achieving greater gender equality and aligning its efforts with the relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to gender equality and clean water and sanitation.

5.0 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

The Water Authority of Fiji’s 2018-2019 Annual Report demonstrates a strong alignment with several SDGs, notably SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). WAF’s programs focused on improving water access, enhancing the resilience of water infrastructure to climate impacts, promoting sustainability, and addressing urban water and sanitation challenges.

These programs not only address the immediate needs of water provision and sanitation but also focus on long-term sustainability and climate resilience, which are central to Fiji's development agenda and the global SDG framework.

6.0 Conclusion

The Committee’s recommendations focus on improving WAF's governance, operational efficiency, infrastructure, and service delivery. The emphasis is on addressing long-standing issues such as non-revenue water, aging infrastructure, and staffing shortages, as well as strengthening public engagement and promoting environmental sustainability. With these improvements, WAF can better meet the needs of its growing population and enhance the resilience of water and sanitation services across Fiji.

Member's Signature:



.....
Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna,
Chairperson



.....
2. Hon. Taito Rokomatu
Deputy Chairperson
Opposition MP



.....
3. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu
Government MP



.....
4. Hon. Kalaveti Ravu
Government MP



.....
5. Hon. Sachida Nand
Opposition MP

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Written Submission

Appendix 2 – Verbatim Report

Appendix 3 – Research Papers

Appendix 4 - Photos

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Written Submission by the
Water Authority of Fiji Jan –
July 2018 and 2018 - 2019
Annual Report

WAF Annual Report Deliberations

**AR 2018 (7 Months)
AR 2018-2019**



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1. Annual Report 2018 (Jan- July) Deliberations
2. Annual Report 2018-2019 Deliberations

Annual Report 2018 (Jan- July) Deliberations

Question 1

Page 18 Rural and Maritime

Can WAF clarify whether the 5 minor metered schemes in the remote islands are treated and filtered for use?

WAF Response

Minor Metered Schemes	
Name	Treatment Type
Vunisea, Kadavu	Partially - treated
Naroi, Moala	Partially - treated
Vanuabalavu	Partially - treated
Lakeba	Partially - treated
Rotuma	Partially - treated

- Chlorine dosing only.

Annual Report 2018 (Jan- July) Deliberations

Question 2

Page 19 Rural Projects covered for the period in 2018

Can WAF please provide data on the rural projects with costing and completion status in 2018.

WAF Response

Out of 65 planned projects, 17 were completed by July 2018, while the rest were completed in the following months. All 65 projects are now completed.

Project Name	Budget
Matamaivere village	\$ 85,075.22
Waisei settlement no.1	\$ 22,324.35
Waisei settlement no.2	\$ 54,383.67
Waivola settlement	\$ 21,574.14
Naceva settlement	\$ 27,854.23
Kicukicu settlement	\$ 38,000.00
Vatubalavu settlement	\$ 33,000.00
Dramoke village	\$ 55,000.00
Davoa settlement	\$ 60,000.00
Dradramea settlement	\$ 26,600.00
Navala Village	\$ 58,500.00
Waidradra/ Nadrau settlement	\$ 189,000.00
Solotavui village	\$ 49,000.00
Yavitu Youth Centre	\$ 77,900.00
Lagalevu settlement	\$ 96,700.00
Vione village	\$ 58,100.00
Nadranoi village	\$ 97,520.00

**17 Projects
completed**

**\$1.05 Million
budget**

Annual Report 2018 (Jan- July) Deliberations

WAF Proposal

- Reinstatement of 10% contribution requirement for rural communities towards the implementation of water projects

Rationale:

1. **Community Ownership:** Requiring a financial contribution fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members, leading to better maintenance and sustainability of the projects.
2. **Financial Sustainability:** The contributions will provide additional funding, allowing for the implementation of more projects and ensuring their long-term viability.
3. **Equity and Fairness:** This policy ensures that all beneficiaries contribute to the costs, promoting fairness and equity in the distribution of resources.

Pilot Water Training in Rural Communities of Fiji

- In October, WAF, in collaboration with the Department of Water and Sewage (DWS), conducted the Pilot Water Training Programme 2024/2025 across three locations:

1. **Nayavu Village Community Hall:** This session catered to 44 villages, with a total attendance of 105 participants (60 males and 45 females).
2. **Silana Village Community Hall:** This session catered to 30 villages, with a total attendance of 125 participants (78 males and 47 females).
3. **Naisaumua Village Community Hall:** This session catered to 36 villages, with a total attendance of 130 participants (72 males and 58 females).

Purpose of training:

- educate communities to take ownership of water asset located in their villages.



Rural water committee training was conducted to ensure that villages take ownership of water resources.

Annual Report 2018 (Jan- July) Deliberations

Question 3 : Page 20 Disposal System

Does WAF have any future plans in terms of treating domestic and industrial wastewater before discharging as stipulated under the Environment Act, EMA?

WAF Response

We currently treat domestic and industrial wastewater at the WWTPs. Industrial customers must pre-treat the industrial wastewater before discharging into the sewer network for treatment at the WWTP. The LTW unit monitors this for the WAF.



Kinoya Wastewater treatment Plant

Annual Report 2018 (Jan- July) Deliberations

Question 4 : Page 21 Remediation

- a) Can WAF please explain more on remediation cases and were there cases of non-adherence? If there were cases of non-adherence, how did the Authority deal with those cases?
- b) Where 'notice of violation' were issued to those violating the law, what measures have WAF taken to address the above?

WAF Response

- a) WAF handles wastewater remediation cases by issuing an Abatement Notice to customers who connect stormwater, discharges grease and untreated industrial waste into the wastewater system requiring disconnection within seven days.
- b) The Authority does not have any legal powers to issue currently to issue fines although these powers were approved by Parliament in July 2022. we await Line Ministry approval on commencement.

Annual Report 2018 (Jan- July) Deliberations

Question 5

Page 24 Liquid Trade Waste- Grease trap compliance

Can WAF please clarify whether all businesses such as restaurants and garage operators are in compliance of the above? Please provide an update.

WAF Response

A large number of businesses were non-compliant hence 27 were issued with Abatement Notices.

Annual Report 2018 (Jan- July) Deliberations

Question 6: Page 24 Liquid Trade Waste LTW

- a) Can WAF please explain on the actions taken against those who do not comply with the standards?
- b) How does WAF ensure industrial businesses comply with LTW criteria?

WAF Response

- a) Customers who fail to adhere to Grease Trap Requirements will receive an abatement notice to install grease trap within a specified timeframe.
- b) Industrial customers are inspected biannually to assess the chemical makeup of their liquid trade waste being released into WAF sewer system. Industrial customers who fail to meet the effluent quality standards should be prepared to provide an Effluent Improvement Plan (EIP) with specified deadlines. This EIP is a component of the criteria for renewing permits.

The Authority does not have any legal powers to issue currently to issue fines although these powers were approved by Parliament in July 2022. we await Line Ministry approval on commencement.

Annual Report 2018 (Jan- July) Deliberations

Question 7

Page 27 Training & Development

- a) Can WAF please clarify whether it has a Human Resources Development Plan?
- b) Was training Need Assessment (TNA) carried out in other units and were the Training reports made available?
- c) What was the impact of the trainings done?

WAF Response

- a) Yes.
- b) Yes, all staff are involved in this comprehensive exercise, in accordance with WAF Training and Development Policy and FNU Grants and Levy Scheme.
- c) The training programs have significantly enhanced employees' skills, leading to improved operational efficiency and better service delivery. The trainings have also fostered innovation and modernisation within the organisation. Overall, the trainings have empowered staff to take on leadership roles, contributing to strategic growth and continuous improvement.

Annual Report 2018 (Jan- July) Deliberations

Question 8

Page 55 Financial Statements, Note 6- 'Other Income'

- a) Can WAF clarify what differed revenue means?

WAF Response

- a) This relates to payment/income/grant received in advance for goods and services that are yet to be provided or delivered. It is recorded as a liability on the balance sheet because the company has an obligation to provide the goods and services in the future. As the goods and services are delivered or performed the deferred revenue is recognized as revenue on the income statement.

Annual Report 2018 (Jan- July) Deliberations

Question 8(b)

Page 55 Financial Statements, Note 6- 'Other Income'

- a) Why was other income very low (\$180,192) in the 7 months in 2018 compared to \$1.04M in 12 months in 2017?

WAF Response

In 2017 WAF received a one-off payment from EFL amounting to \$683k for the use of the Nagado water supply system to generate electricity to the new hydroelectric power station. This caused a significant increase in the 2017 other income compared to 2018.

Annual Report 2018 (Jan- July) Deliberations

Question 9

Page 55- Note 7

It's a concern that all expenses for the 7 months are far higher than the proportionate months of 2017. The directors fee for 7 months is 37% higher than the total annual fee of 2017. Can the Authority explain?

WAF Response

Please note not all expenses for the 7 months are far higher than 2017 figures.

The Directors' fees are as set by the Ministry of Public Enterprise. It also includes travel, regional meetings and site visits by the Board.

The major expenses relate to Plant hire where increase in repairs & maintenance works. There were three major shutdowns conducted to repair & rehab works carried out on Vaturu Nagado raw water infrastructure.

Annual Report 2018 (Jan- July) Deliberations

Question 10

Page 56- Note 8

Can WAF explain why FNPF amount does not tally with the salary and wages for the 7-months of 2018? The FNPF amount indicated is approximately 5.2% of the total wages and salary paid.

WAF Response

After the adjustment of capex related staff cost, accruals, non-members to wages & salaries account, the FNPF percentage is 10% of the net wages as depicted below:

Expenses	2018 \$
Total Salaries and wages	22,803,400
Less Project salary (FNPF & Salaries capitalised)	(11,564,301)
Reversal of non members	(548)
Add wages accruals reversed in 2018	583,144
Net Salaries and wages	11,821,695
FNPF	1,182,818
Percentage (FNPF)	10%
<i>FNPF rate as per legislation</i>	10%

Annual Report 2018 (Jan- July) Deliberations

Question 11

Page 56- Note 8

Why was there an increase in salaries and wages in 2018? (7 months \$22.8M as compared to 12 months of 2017 at \$ 29.9M) \$3.2M a month 2018 and \$2.49 M in 2017? Please explain?

WAF Response

There was increase in recruitment of permanent staffs by 39, increase in acting roles noted, realignment of projects workers' pay and realignment of Graduate Engineers, Engineers, Project leaders & Project Managers pay.

Annual Report 2018 (Jan- July) Deliberations

Question 12

Gender

Can WAF please provide an update to the Committee on the gender breakdown of staff?

WAF Response

Total workforce number was 1185.

	Central/ Eastern	Western	Northern
Female	103	39	11
Male	546	351	135
Total	649	390	146

153
Females

1032
Males

Annual Report 2018 (Jan- July) Deliberations

Question 13

SDG- Sustainable Development Goal

- a) How has WAF integrated the principles of SDGs, particularly SDG 6 into its water management programs and projects during the first half of 2018, and what specific outcomes have been achieved in term of access to clean water and sanitation?
- b) Can WAF please identify its other relevant SDG's and what measures WAF have in place to monitor its implementation?

WAF Response

- a) In 2018, we increase water service delivery by **1511** connections and increased wastewater connections by **2332**.
- b) WAF's efforts under SDG 6 focus on providing safe drinking water (SDG 6.1), equitable sanitation (SDG 6.2), and improved wastewater treatment (SDG 6.3).

Annual Report 2018/2019

Deliberations

Annual Report 2018/2019 Deliberations

Question 1

Page 14- Non-revenue water (NRW)

- a) A budget of \$4.7M was received in 2018/2019 to carry out NRW reduction works, can WAF provide details on how the budget was spent?
- b) Please provide an update on the NRW works carried out?

WAF Response

- a) The table below provides the breakdown of NRW budget for 2018/2019.

NRW 2018/2019 Budget	
Projects	Budget
Leak reduction programme	\$ 1,630,000.00
Service pipe replacement	\$ 770,000.00
Boundary valve replacement program	\$ 79,000.00
Air Valve installation/ replacement	\$ 60,000.00
PRV Installation	\$ 100,000.00
Project Management Cost	\$ 500,000.00
GIS	\$ 1,340,000.00
Water Modelling	\$ 221,000.00
Total	\$ 4,700,000.00

- b) **12,800** Leak complaints resolved, **4155** service pipes replaced, **36** boundary valves replacement, **36** air valves installed and **55** pressure reduction valves installed.

Annual Report 2018/2019 Deliberations

Question 2

How much was the first carbon funding received from UN? Can WAF please explain?

WAF Response

\$331,485. 00 was the carbon funding received. This funding was provided to WAF as an initiative through ADB and United Nations Future Climate Fund [UNFCCC] in reduction of greenhouse gas emissions at Kinoya Wastewater treatment plant.

Annual Report 2018/2019 Deliberations

Question 3

- a) How long the Green House Gas have been emitting from treatment plants?
- b) Has there been research work done for better options to the use of methane gas?



WAF Response

- a) Greenhouse gases are naturally occurring in all human waste. The green house gets emitted on daily basis from all our Wastewater treatment plants and has been emitted from the time the plants were constructed.
- b) The upgrade of the Kinoya Treatment Plant will incorporate improvements to methane capture with the possible activities.

Annual Report 2018/2019 Deliberations

Question 4

Page 11- Production SBU- Capital Projects

The committee noted from the report that the population of Fiji is 24,648,293. Can WAF explain more on this data?

WAF Response

This is a typing error. The correct amount is 24,932 population benefiting from rural projects.

Annual Report 2018/2019 Deliberations

Question 5

Page 18- Liquid Trade Waste

- a) What is the compliance level from businesses associated with liquid trade waste?
- b) What is the efficiency level of WAF in collecting water bill payments from customers?
- c) How much is owed to WAF in terms of unpaid bills and what are your plans in place to recover those unpaid water bills?

WAF Response

- a) In 2018/2019, compliance level was 29%.
- b) WAF is currently achieving an 85% efficiency level in water bill collection.
- c) WAF currently has outstanding unpaid bills totalling to \$29.15 million

Recovery plans:

- Structured payment plans
- Automated billing and reminders
- Legal actions for large debtors
- Community awareness campaigns
- Outsourced Disconnections works

Annual Report 2018/2019 Deliberations

Question 6

Page 19- Strategic Planning

Can WAF please explain the strategic plan review and how did WAF plan its objectives and activities during the review period?

WAF Response

The SDG 6 and the National Development Plan provided the basis for WAF Strategic direction. The objectives and action plans included in the document are aligned with strategic directions and WAFs legislative requirements.

Annual Report 2018/2019 Deliberations

Question 7

Page 20- Internal Audit, Risk and Compliance Unit

- a) Can WAF please provide the outcome of the 25 cases of special investigation?
- b) Was there any monitoring mechanism in place to monitor cases such as above?

WAF Response

- a) The Special Investigation is the term used for internal investigations for employee related matters. The cases concluded in disciplinary actions where necessary. These actions were implemented to reinforce compliance and uphold WAF's operational standards.
- b) Yes, special investigation are carried by Internal Audit team on any procedural complaints within the organization. The findings are reported to Boards Audit-Risk Committee.

Annual Report 2018/2019 Deliberations

Question 8

It is quite evident that annual reports continued to be submitted late. The -latest being 2018/2019 annual report submitted in 2022.(both reports were presented to parliament on 11th Sept 2023 and submitted to NRC for scrutiny) Can WAF please explain the reasons for the late submission of annual reports?

WAF Response

WAF now submitted all the Annual Reports up to 2022 and intend to catch up on the remaining reports.



Annual Report 2018/2019 Deliberations

Question 9

Page 20- Human Resources Unit

The Human Resources unit is a crucial unit of any organisation. The annual report for the report under review did not capture staff statistics including total workforce, gender breakdown, staff training, staff recruitment and staff vacancies. Can WAF please explain and provide statistics?

WAF Response

Total workforce number was 1142 (July 2018–1 August 2019), wherein 149 were females and 993 were males.

81 training events were conducted for staff members.

133 positions were vacant during this period; however, the numbers vary for each year (2018/2019) based on resignations, recruitment.

Annual Report 2018/2019 Deliberations

Question 10

Page 6- The organisation structure

Out of the 24 Executive positions, 14 were vacant, only 10 were filled which effectively meant that only 42% of the positions were filled. Can WAF please explain?

WAF Response

In 2018/2019, we had 9 Executive positions and 15 managerial positions.

The vacant positions were gradually filled based on a review of organisational needs.

VINAKA



Appendix 2

Verbatim Report

[VERBATIM REPORT]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

ANNUAL REPORT

WATER AUTHORITY OF FIJI

JANUARY TO JULY 2018 AND 2018 TO 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

SUBMITTEE: Water Authority of Fiji

VENUE: Big Committee Room, Parliament

DATE: Wednesday, 27th November, 2024

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM (EAST/WEST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS ON WEDNESDAY, 27TH NOVEMBER, 2024 AT 10.45 A.M.

Interviewee/Submittee: **Water Authority of Fiji**

In Attendance:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 1) Dr. Amit Chanan | - | Chief Executive Officer |
| 2) Mr. Kavneel Prasad | - | Chief Financial Officer |
| 3) Mr. Seru Soderberg | - | Chief Operations Officer |

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, members of the media and public, secretariat, dear viewers, ladies and gentlemen, a very good morning to you all. It is a pleasure to welcome everyone, especially the viewers who are watching this session. I am privileged to chair this second submission meeting for the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, which is being aired live on the Parliament channel through the Walesi platform and livestreamed through Parliament's *Facebook* page.

At the outset, for information purpose, pursuant to Standing Order 111 of Parliament, all Committee meetings are to be open to the public, therefore, this submission is open to the public and media and will also be aired live, as I had earlier mentioned. However, for any sensitive information concerning this submission that cannot be disclosed in public, this can be provided to the Committee either in private or in writing, but do note that this will only be allowed in a few specific circumstances which includes:

- 1) National security matters;
- 2) Third party confidential information;
- 3) Personnel or human resource matters; and
- 4) Meetings, whereby the Committee deliberates on all issues before it and develops its recommendations and reports.

I wish to remind honourable Members and our invited submittees that all comments and questions to be asked, are to be addressed through the Chair. Also be mindful that only the invited submittees will be allowed to ask any questions or give comments to the Committee. This is a parliamentary meeting, and all information gathered is covered for under the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act and the Standing Order of Parliament. Please note that the Committee does not condone libel or slander or any allegations against any individual that is not present today to defend themselves.

In terms of other protocols of this Committee meeting, please be advised that whilst the meeting is in progress, movements within the meeting room will be restricted. There should be minimum usage of mobile phones, whereby answering of phones should be done outside this room, and all mobile phones to be on silent mode.

(Introduction of Committee Members)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Isikeli Tuiwailevu has sent his apologies because of commitment this morning.

With us this morning, we have the representatives from the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) who have been requested to provide a submission on the Water Authority of Fiji for January to July 2018 and the 2018 to 2019 Annual Report. Now, I take this opportunity to invite our submission guests to introduce themselves before we proceed with the submission. Please note that if there are any questions by Members and the Committee, they may interject or will wait till the end of the presentation and ask questions.

(Introduction of the representatives from Water Authority of Fiji)

MR. A. CHANAN.- Mr. Chairman, the reports that we are deliberating on are from way back in 2018. They are from January 2018 to July 2018, that is one report for seven months, and then from that period on we started reporting on a financial year basis, so there is 2018-2019 is also being considered. Just acknowledging at the outset that as an executive we have the challenging task of catching up in terms of annual reporting. When we started as a team, the last annual report was 2017 that was submitted, and I am pleased to report to the Committee that as of now, we have already submitted up to 2022 financial year. We are aiming to catch up and become contemporary in terms of annual reports by the end of this calendar year.

In terms of the question about rural and maritime, five minor schemes that we had delivered in 2018, the question regarding those schemes whether they were filtered schemes. These minor schemes are chlorine dosing only. The schemes were in Kadavu, Moala, Lakeba, Rotuma and they were delivered in 2018. The treatment essentially is just chlorination. Chlorination assists with killing any harmful micro organisms and it also helps with residual protection in the network. These are smaller schemes, so the treatment that we provide there is only chlorination.

The second question was about the rural projects that were delivered in the year 2018. We completed 17 projects in that year with a budget of \$1.05 million. There were 65 planned projects which were subsequently completed. We have provided a list of all those projects for the Committee's information.

Rural water supply is an area of focus for the Water Authority and for the line Ministry, and we are doing some work in terms of improving the capacity of water committees. Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I would like to ask our Chief Operating Officer just to give an update on what we are doing in terms of upskilling the water committees.

MR. S. SODERBERG.- Mr. Chairman, just for your update in terms of the upskilling of the water committees in our rural areas. As of the month of October 2024, we carried out three trainings of rural water committees. The first one was carried out at the Nayavu Village Community Hall, which catered for 44 villages, and we had a total attendance of 105 participants with 60 males and 45 females.

Silana Village Community Hall was the second location, where we catered for 30 villages with a total attendance of 125 participants with 78 males and 47 females.

The last one was at Naisaumua Village Community Hall. This session catered for 36 villages with a total attendance of 130 participants - 72 males and 58 females.

The purpose of the training is to educate the communities to take ownership of the water supply asset that has been delivered by the Government through Water Authority of Fiji to provide them with water supply, and also to reduce the impact of no water supply that is encountered by the communities when events such as heavy rainfall or dam blockages occur. It is just a way of upskilling and giving them the proper tools to be able to tackle any issues that they might affect water supply to the communities. For bigger incidence where the water communities would be challenged in terms of capacity to address them, this would be referred to WAF for our trained technicians to go and attend.

MR. A. CHANAN.- Mr. Chairman, we should also acknowledge the support from UNICEF where we received (Fiji office) funding for us to be able to run those trainings.

The next question was about the treatment of domestic and industrial wastewater to meet the Environment Management Act requirements. We currently treat domestic and industrial wastewater at 11 of our wastewater treatment plants. We also have Liquid Trade Waste Unit that requires the industrial customers to retreat their wastewater before discharging into our network.

In terms of compliance with the Environmental Management Act, not any of our wastewater treatment plant is currently fully compliant, and it is an issue that we have identified in our Water Sector 2050 Strategy. These plants are currently operating under interim operating permit, and there is need for investment which is identified in the Water Sector 2050 Strategy.

Mr. Chairman, the next question relates to the remediation in terms of non-adherence to our liquid trade waste requirements, and what Water Authority of Fiji is doing. In that regard, we handle cases of non-compliance by issuing abatement notices to customers. Non-compliance could be illegal stormwater connection into our wastewater network, discharging grease into our wastewater network and untreated wastewater from industrial and commercial customers, which can impact on our ability to treat that wastewater. The Authority does not have any legal powers to issue any infringement. Those legal powers were sought by the Authority and approved by Parliament in July 2022. We are awaiting our line Ministry's approval on the commencement of those powers. In the absence of our ability to issue any infringement, we are partially effective, I would say, in stopping such anti-social behaviour.

The next question is in regards to liquid trade waste and grease trap compliance. In 2018, there were a large number of businesses that were found to be non-compliant. I should point out that our liquid trade waste guidelines actually came into force in June 2017, and after our initial education and awareness programme, we started issuing abatements from about mid to late 2017. So, for the reporting period, 27 abatement notices were issued.

The following question is about liquid trade waste in terms of dealing with those who are not complying with our standards. Again, with regards to grease traps, we do repeatedly visit the restaurants, fried fish and fried chicken kind of outlets where there is a lot of use of fat and oils, and the requirement for those customers is to have grease traps. Similarly, industry customers are also inspected biannually to ensure that the chemical make up of the wastewater that they are discharging is suitable for our sewer system to receive, and where we feel that it is not compliant, we ask them, an Effluent Improvement Plan is required.

Once again, the Authority does not have the legal powers to issue any infringement where there is non-compliance. As per the previous answer, those powers were approved in fact by Parliament in July 2022 and we are awaiting our line Ministry for their approval so that we can commence those powers. The effectiveness of our ability to regulate, it is not just in Fiji, it is a global experience that utilities do need the ability to have infringement powers to influence that positive behaviour, and we are awaiting the approval from the line Ministry, so we can exercise those powers.

Mr. Chairman, the next question relates to training and development. I can confirm that in 2018 we did have a Human Resource Development Plan, and all staff were involved in this exercise. In 2018 we did develop a Training and Development Policy and a training and development needs assessment was carried out. The training programmes that were rolled out had significantly enhanced employees' skills, leading to improved operational efficiency and better service delivery.

The next question relates to our financial statement and there was a Note 6 regarding other income. It relates to the financial definition, and I will ask our Chief Financial Officer (CFO) to explain that.

MR. K. PRASAD.- Mr. Chairman, the question was in regards to clarifying further on the deferred revenue part of the financial statements in Note 6. The Water Authority of Fiji follows the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS 15) to record our revenue, such as deferred revenue. This account relates to the grant received in advance for goods and services that are yet to be provided or delivered. It is recorded as a liability on the balance sheet because the Authority has the obligation to provide the service in the future. It is later on recognised as an income when the service is delivered.

MR. A. CHANAN.- Mr. Chairman, the next question relates to our financial statement - other income. Water Authority of Fiji has an accredited national laboratory that provides services not just to the Authority, but to others as well. So, there is an annual revenue of around \$180,000 that we generate through our national laboratory. But the increased revenue that is reflected in the 2017 statement relates to the payment from Energy Fiji Limited (EFL) from the hydro scheme that is operated at Nagado. There was about \$685,000 paid by EFL. The generation of that electricity was dependent on the dam levels. In the subsequent year, there was no generation of electricity of the same capacity, therefore, the income was less.

The next question, Mr. Chairman, relates to director fees for the seven months of 2018. In 2018 from January to July period, the Board had its meetings in regional areas and the cost associated with the Board meeting including accommodation and staff travel were all expensed to the same line item - director expenses. I should point out that director fees is just one item in there and the fees are set as per the Ministry of Public Enterprise. The other major expense in that year is related to repairs and maintenance, and we had three major shut downs in the West on Vaturu and Nagado raw water infrastructure.

The next question relates to the FNPF payment, and once again I will ask the CFO to explain that.

MR. K. PRASAD.- Mr. Chairman, this question in regards to the 5.2 percent FNPF calculation based on our financial report. So, basically we have a total of \$22 million cost of salary after capitalising, after taking into account the accruals and after taking into account the

reversal on non-member wages and salaries, the FNPF calculates to 10 percent of the overall figure. We have capitalised \$11.5 million towards our capital allocation.

MR. A. CHANAN.- Mr. Chairman, the next question relates to increase in salaries in that seven-month reporting period. During those seven months, there was an increase of head count by 39, and there was an increase in primarily the professional staff ranks. During that year, there was a realignment of salaries for graduate engineers, engineers and project leaders that attributed to the difference in the salaries in that year.

The next question relates to our gender breakdown for the 2018 reporting period. For the reporting period, the total workforce was 1,185, of which, we have 153 females and 1,032 males. Certainly, that is an area we acknowledge that we can do better and we are continuing to aspire and strive to improve our gender balance. I am happy to report that in our M3 level, there are more female managers in the senior management.

We have also set up a gender taskforce which is ably led by our Chief Legal and Procurement Officer, and she is working with the staff to find more meaningful and practical actions that we can implement to improve our gender balance. One of which is the introduction of a new apprenticeship programme, and that is the entry level into the organisation which we are striving to have as close to 50:50 male female ratio as we can for the apprenticeship programme. That is one of the key programmes where we will try to slowly but gradually change our gender balance.

Mr. Chairman, the next question relates to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in terms of what we have achieved for SDG6 and what other relevant SDGs relate to our business. With regards to SDG6, I should point out that that is the primary goal that gets us out of bed every morning. With SDG6, which is about access to safe drinking water and sanitation, in the 2018 reporting period we had increased the connections to drinking by 1,511, and we had increased connections to our wastewater network by 2,332.

Other SDGs that relate to Water Authority of Fiji operations are:

- 1) SDG11 is about sustainable cities and communities. Our water supply resilience, water supply security and resilience to disaster is a key attribute, and our actions in our Water Sector 2050 Strategy are striving to achieve SDG11.
- 2) SDG13 is about climate action. Again, in our Water Sector 2050 Strategy and our Strategic Plan, we identified projects that we need to implement for greater climate resilience.
- 3) SDG14 is about life below water. Our focus on improving our wastewater treatment plants treating capacity is aimed at protecting marine environment. That is our work towards SDG14.
- 4) SDG8 is about decent work and economic growth. Water is the key input into economic growth. Without water there is no tourism, so that something is highlighted in our Water Sector 2050 Strategy. Also in that economy space, secular economy is also an area that we are focusing on.

Mr. Chairman, now we will move onto the question relating to 2018-2019 Annual report. The first question relates to the expenditure of \$4.7 million in managing Non-Revenue Water (NRW) and in 2018 to 2019. Sir, NRW is one of our key areas of focus and essential for

our long term viability. I will ask our Chief Operating Officer to highlight some of our achievement from that financial year.

MR. S. SODERBERG.- Mr. Chairman, just for the financial year 2018 to 2019 in the space of Non-Revenue Water reduction. The Water Authority of Fiji, under the Non-Revenue Water reduction programme resolved a total of 12,800 leaks that was sent in the form of complaints and also replaced 4,155 service pipes and installed 36 boundary valves and 55 pressure reduction valves within its network. For the information of the Committee, the pressure reducing valve is one of the key assets that the Water Authority of Fiji is currently investing in to control pressures to manage the frequency of the bursting of the old infrastructure that we currently operate.

MR. A. CHANAN.- Mr. Chairman, the next question is about how much funding did we receive for carbon funding from UN with regards to the Kinoya Wastewater Treatment Plant? We received \$331,485 for carbon funding. This funding was provided to WAF as an initiative through ADB under the United Nations Future Climate Fund programme for reducing greenhouse gas emissions at Kinoya Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The next question relates to how long the greenhouse gases have been emitting from treatment plants and has there been any work done for better options? I should point out that gases such as methane and carbon dioxide are present naturally in all human waste, as such, these greenhouse gases are being emitted on a daily basis from all the wastewater treatment plants, including Kinoya.

In terms of our research and what we intend to do, the imminent upgrade of Kinoya wastewater treatment plant will incorporate measures to capture methane and possibly utilise it for energy recovery, and that will help us with the greenhouse emissions as well.

The next question, Mr. Chairman, in 2018-2019 we reported a rather large number of population that benefited from rural projects. We do apologise, it was a typing error. The correct population was 24,932 that benefitted from our rural projects. It was erroneously reported as 24 million, our apologies for that.

The next question is about liquid trade waste and our bill recovery. In 2018-2019, the compliance with liquid trade waste guidelines was around 29 percent. In terms of our efficiency of our bill recovery, we currently have an efficiency of 85 percent. So 85 percent of the monthly invoice amount is what we are able to collect. Our current unpaid bills or debt is \$29.15 million. It was about \$33 million 18 months or so ago. We have been working on a recovery plan that includes structured payment plan options for people; and automated billing reminders, which is a tally software ability that we have recently implemented in our billing software. We are also contemplating legal actions for large debtors; we are running community awareness campaigns and that is an ongoing cycle. We are also focusing on disconnections because when all else fails, generally disconnection works. So, to enhance our own capacity to be able to disconnect, we are also relying on a private sector provider to do disconnection. All those efforts have assisted us to bring the debt from \$33 million down to \$29.15 million, and there is a bit more work to be done obviously given that a rather large number is still outstanding.

The next question is about strategic planning. What are the objectives and activities in the Strategic Plan? The primary objectives of our strategic plan are derived from SDG6 and

the National Development Plan. Those two documents give us the basis for our strategic direction. The objectives and actions that are included in these documents are aligned to SDG6 and NDP and they are further aligned to our legislative obligations.

The next question, Question 7 for 2018-2019 relates to the 25 special investigations and what mechanisms we have in place to monitor such issues? The term “special investigations” may sound more alarming than what it represents. Special investigation is a term we use for any internal investigation for employee related matters. We do have, like any organisation, sound governance procedures to handle any investigation relating to employee matters, and it is done by our Internal Audit Risk and Investigation Team. These cases could include disciplinary actions where necessary. All the investigations are reported to the Board’s Audit and Risk Committee and duly followed by the Board.

Question 8 relates to our rather late submission of annual reports and as I have said in the opening, the task that the current executive had was to catch up from 2017. I am pleased to report once again that we have now submitted up to Financial Year 2022. By the end of the calendar year, we should become up to speed, we will catch up. We have done significant work to get there and apologies for the past.

The next question is about human resources, reporting of key staff statistics in terms of workforce make up. In the year 2018-2019, we had 1,142 employees, of which, 149 were females and 993 males. In terms of training, 81 training events were conducted and a wide range of staff attended those training events. In terms of vacancies, there were 133 positions vacant. Our vacancy rate varies year-on-year, and it is also influenced by job market. For the reporting year, there were 133 vacant positions.

Mr. Chairman, the last question for that reporting year was about 24 executive positions and 14 were vacant. Just to clarify, in 2018-2019 there were nine executive positions and there were 15 managerial positions. These vacant positions were gradually filled, and the new structure of the executives and management positions are now currently filled.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you Doctor Amit for the presentation. The purpose, as I have said, for the submission is to get clarification on issues with matters that are reported, and it provides us more information on what has been reported. It is also an avenue where we exchange our ideas in terms of how we can improve reporting so that the Committee will understand operations, functions and achievements of the organisation that we are scrutinising their report.

We will have time for questions but I thought to mention this from the start that we had looked at the report and we have seen a lot of achievements. There were very few instances where we saw the targets, or what WAF would have really wanted to achieve over the years. It is always good to have reports that link to the target, because normally the targets is where we get the funding and the workplans for the year. As I have said, this is an old report. We will look through the report, make our recommendation, send it back to Parliament, which will be forwarded to your organisation. Thank you very much for highlighting some of the grey areas that we had when we were looking through the report. I have a few questions from the presentation and probably my team will have some questions on what they encountered when they travelled around and also from the presentation.

I have one on the methane from Kinoya. I am saying this because we have a power station next to the treatment plant. Do you have some plans that you would want to share with us on how we can better utilise or using methane as a source of energy simply because the power plant is right next to the treatment plant?

MR. A. CHANAN.- Mr. Chairman, I think you have very well spotted the opportunity. It is fortunate that the wastewater treatment plant is right next to the energy generation facility. The concept design that we are currently developing, in fact looks at the option of capturing that methane and possibly passing it over to EFL for generating electricity. It, of course, will require collaboration with the EFL, so while we are still developing the concept design, we will engage with them in due course. There certainly is that possibility that we are exploring.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- My second question, the powers that you have to actually follow up with the prosecution of taking people accountable for negligence or not following what is normally required from them. Would you like to explain more, because I thought you said of something back in 2022?

MR. A. CHANAN.- Mr. Chairman, the current situation that we have is, you could have a repeat offender who might discharge oil in the sewerage system, and once that oil gets into the sewerage system it solidifies and it leads to sewerage overflows. That happens quite regularly around the country, and we go and give them an abatement notice and say, “do not do that.” What we do not have is an ability to go and say, “We told you not to do it, you have done it, now you will have to pay a fine.” The ability to issue an infringement is the power that we have been seeking. Parliament had approved that in July 2022, and as I understand, it required regulation, so that process is underway. My understanding is that our line Ministry is now looking at it and once the line Ministry approves it, hopefully that regulation will be in place and then we will have the ability to issue those fines.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I have a question that was part of my observation even before the tour that was made by the staff last week. Again, I would like to declare my interest because it is in my province in Bua. It may not have been reported well or never been reported in this report, but it would have started before this report. This is the Kubulau Water Scheme, which I think a lot of progress had been done to the project lately. Would you like to explain on that project? A lot of viewers will probably want to hear on this Kubulau Water Scheme since it will benefit seven villages to eight villages in the area.

MR. A. CHANAN.- Mr. Chairman, Kubulau Water Scheme project is well underway. We had anticipated to have a construction programme of about six months. That is how we have engaged the project team to get the project done. The current assessment is that it will need another three months to reach completion. Some of the project-based staff’s contract terms have been renewed for another three months to make sure that it reaches completion. We anticipate by February or March next year, we should be able to supply water through the scheme to those areas.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Again this may not be for Kubulau but for other project areas where some work would have been done if there would have been consideration of using not only local resources, but also in terms of the labour that are normally required to do the work. I have seen this in a few other parts of Fiji where we tend to overlook the capacities and capabilities of those who live around where the project areas are. It would have costed a lot more if we have to get them from outside those localities. You would have had some better

plans to address this after having some experiences on the difficulty of getting people to work in other areas. Do you want to say something on that?

MR. A. CHANAN.- The delivery of rural projects getting labour to do the work is one of the biggest cost line item in terms of small rural projects, particularly when you are working on remote maritime islands, or even in some interiors. The way the rural scheme programme was first structured, there used to be voluntary labour provided by the villages benefitting from the scheme. I think that used to be about 15 percent of the project value that used to be contributed by the labour from the village.

Over the years, and our records show that somewhere around 2016 and 2017, that stopped happening. As a result, the labour cost component of rural projects has gone up. It also in our observation, impacts on the ownership of the project as well. I think it is a rural water management policy matter that we should revisit. If we engage the community in that constructive sense that the policy was originally intended to do, it would be good because it results in ownership as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I think that is exactly what I wanted to say in terms of how we benefit from the project, not only in terms of water that they are going to get, but in terms of the available facility they will have including roading that could be used for farm roads and other uses. I think we should be in a position to relook at some of the policies we make, especially in the sense that they will have to have ownership and they will have to be part of the cost by contributing whatever they could. I hope, not only WAF will do it, the other ministries could probably do the same. I think it also goes back to how you can link with other ministries where those facilities can benefit or even achieve the targets that they want to achieve. In this particular case for Kubulau, the road is probably going to be very useful for those who want to use that area for farming.

HON. S. NAND.- Mr. Chairman, through you, thank you for the presentation, it was quite informative. A few questions from the presentation. One is under the rural water supply training, you said that you have conducted a number of trainings and a number of people have been involved in getting trained. How effective are these trainings? The rural water projects, after completion when you hand it over to them, how effectively is it managed? Do you have issues with it and if you have issues, how do you deal with it? Do you directly liaise with rural water supply of the communities, or you work in sync with other departments?

MR. S. SODERBERG.- Mr. Chairman, with respect to the training that is being undertaken, I would just like to highlight that the training happened in the month of October that has just gone past us. We are currently monitoring the impact of the training to the water committee. I understand the reason for the question, and to answer that, in previous years, when rural water supply infrastructure used to be handed over to the community, what we noted at the Water Authority of Fiji is, we have water committees who are quite efficient in terms of tackling the challenges that come and maintaining the infrastructure. There are also big challenges. In some of the other communities, the training that was imparted onto them did not really translate into the efficient maintenance and operation of the water supply system.

In terms of the question around, how impactful has the training that occurred in October is? So far, I can honestly say at this point, we are monitoring it. We will be happy to provide further updates as we get further into the programme and monitoring these villages in terms of the work of the water committees.

In terms of the issues that they do face, during the presentation I had mentioned the minor challenges. During this training we have also provided the water committees with fully equipped tool boxes for them to tackle minor repairs that needs to be done. For repairs that is beyond the communities' capacity, the water committees can directly liaise with Water authority of Fiji, or they normally would go through the Commissioner's office or the PAs to get us to come across and undertake that.

Mr. Chairman, as an example, for the Muaniweni Rural Community there is a river crossing over the rural water supply pipeline which is underwater. Any issues that happen on that particular section of the pipeline, our certified divers from the Water Authority of Fiji are sent to carry out repairs. That is the understanding around the management of the rural water infrastructure in terms of what their responsibilities are and when does the Water Authority of Fiji step in to provide assistance. I hope that answers your question, Sir.

HON. S. NAND.- The reason why I asked that question is that a lot of time, money and effort is spent in getting those projects set up. The objective is to get safe drinking water to the communities. If the projects are not looked after and debris in the dams are not cleared, then it affects the quality of the drinking water, and this is the purpose why it was established and money spent on the project. It is very important for the community to manage, and if they are not doing so, it is important that refresher trainings and probably a bit of handholding needs to be done to ensure that they do benefit from what they were supposed to benefit from.

Just following on from the honourable Chairman's question, the non-compliance on liquid trade waste. You have mentioned in the presentation that it was approved in July 2022, and it is over 27 months now and you are still awaiting the regulations to be set up so that you can start imposing those penalties and fines and ensuring compliance. Have you received any feedback on what the delay is and why it has taken over 27 months to get those regulations and other things done?

MR. A. CHANAN.- Mr. Chairman, our Chief Legal and Procurement Officer briefed the Permanent Secretary yesterday on the regulation. We are hopeful that if there were any outstanding clarifications needed were addressed yesterday.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, going back to Question 2. Out of 65 planned projects, 17 were completed by 18th July, while the rest were completed in the following months. From all those projects, 65 have been completed and the rest of the projects, 48 altogether to be completed within the following months. All those projects from that year, a leftover of 48 projects to be completed, and in the next year we heard another announcement from the budget of another project coming up to the committee. How do you monitor those projects to all those communities, or implementing all those projects in the communities?

MR. A. CHANAN.- Mr. Chairman, there were a number of projects that in that backlog. I am going back to 2018-2019. When the project programme does not get done in a year, it does get carried forward to the next year and as a result, it impacts on the delivery capacity. What we have done in the last couple of years is, we cleared all that backlog and each year we are now delivering between seven projects or eight new projects in the rural communities. That is the current delivery capacity and all the issues of backlogs that were there from previous years, we are gradually clearing that and reporting to Board in making sure that all those issues have been resolved. There is a list of projects that we have sent to the secretariat to provide

you in terms of all those 65 projects that have been delivered, as well as any of the backlogs that we have have been cleared.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, I would like to commend the Water Authority of Fiji for the hard work that have been carried out for the previous year. During my visitation last week, I have seen a lot of changes, and a lot of work had been carried out. Mostly the hard work is already established. I would like to commend you for the work. I have two questions - one is from the presentation on coverage. Can you please explain more on coverage whether it includes rural-urban dwellings? We can see water disruption length as 4,232 kilometres. Most of these pipes were from the colonial days, I think that is a huge piping system. Can you explain more on that?

MR. A. CHANAN.- Through you, Mr. Chairman, thank you for the question, honourable Member. You are right, a large part of our pipe network is greater than 50 years old and that certainly is a challenge and is reflected in the leakage that we face. In terms of coverage, in the urban area we have 97 percent coverage. The way the Water Sector 2050 Strategy is now structured, we are creating what we call a “hub-and-spoke-model”. We are creating water treatment hubs in the country. To give you an example, let us say, Seaqaqa in the North, we create a water treatment hub there. Once we create the hub, then all the peri-urban areas and nearby villages that are not too far, we run pipelines to them, so they are the spokes.

Similarly, we will have a hub in Labasa, hub in Seaqaqa and hub in Savusavu and then we run pipelines to all the peri-urban villages that were previously on rural schemes, we are taking treated urban water supply to those, and that is replicated across the country. That is how we are, not only improving the water quality capacity, but also extending our network to all the peri-urban areas.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- My next question is during my visit to Lautoka, there was an issue from the Water Authority in Lautoka with regards to involving the landowning unit, Saru Water Supply. Can you explain the process of the water system? We heard that only 500 metres is left and I think the landowning unit is stopping the contractors continuing with the work. Can you explain more on that, please?

MR. S. SODERBERG.- Mr. Chairman, just on the Varaqe project and on the question with respect to the water supply in Lautoka, the new project that the Government is investing in is the upgrade of the raw water trunk main for the Varaqe/Saru pipeline that looks after the Vuda area. The treatment plant itself is a five megalitre water treatment plant. In terms of the works that is currently going, we have around 450 metres to 500 metres, as correctly stated by you, Sir, that we have to install. However, at this point, the landowning unit are not in agreement to the use of their land where we need to put in this pipeline. We have looked at the possibility of putting in alternative routes, however, every route that we need to take, will go through the landowning units’ land. So, what we are planning to undertake at the moment is, one way of approaching this is to descope that last 450 metres, because at this point we have not been able to come to an agreement with the landowners on some of their concerns. We are looking at descope the last 450 metres to 500 metres so we can end the project and at a time when the community agrees that we will install the pipeline through their land, then we will pick up the project and complete the installation of the way to the dam. That is the approach we are doing at the moment.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Thank you for that answer. Is it possible to get iTaukei Affairs on board to deal with the landowning unit?

MR. A. CHANAN.- Mr. Chairman, we are engaging with the relevant departments to seek assistance, and taking all reasonable measures that we can to come to some sort of amicable resolution of the issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- There had always been issues with the landowners in the past, not only for roading but also for other projects. I am led to believe that initial preparatory work and consultations normally addresses the issues. They normally change and sometimes extended a lot of the projects that could not be completed. Having said that, there had also been instances where organisations do not live up to the agreements that were normally made in the first place. I have had some calls with regards to the project in Namau, Tailevu, where the landowners are still requesting on the premium that was supposed to be paid for the areas that had been required to be leased out for catchment. You might want to discuss on the Namau issue?

MR. A. CHANAN.- Mr. Chairman, in terms of the pipeline project, we did do some initial agreements. In fact, the project process now requires an initial agreement for lease to be agreed and some terms and conditions agreed before we commenced on a project. Unfortunately on that case, some things have changed as the project approached with the landowning unit landholding. With regards to catchment, there is a Cabinet decision as you might be aware, the iTaukei Affairs are currently looking at standing tree compensation developing some methodology around that. The Board of Water Authority of Fiji is keen to get that methodology finalised, and once that is done, then we will be able to follow the process to do the compensation for catchments. So, we are just waiting for that process to be developed and agreed by the key Government entities, and then we will be able to entertain that catchment leasing.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Any other questions from Members?

HON. S. NAND.- Mr. Chairman, a few more questions. You have mentioned about gender balance. From the 2018 to 2019 and January to July Report, there is a huge gender disparity in the management positions, not only in the management positions, but in the Board. We are moving towards more gender equal boards and institutions but it is quite an obvious mismatch. I hope that has been rectified in the new management positions, and hopefully you have a bit of a gender balance in the board too. Can you elaborate on that?

MR. A. CHANAN.- Mr. Chairman, there is a very capable Board Director, Madam Mele Rakai on our Board, so I am pleased to report there is a bit of improved gender balance. It is not balanced but at least we are moving in the right direction. In terms of staffing itself, as I pointed out, it is the statistics that we at the executive level are not necessarily proud of and we do want to change it.

We wanted to invest in areas where it actually can make a measurable difference, so that is why we have set up the gender taskforce, chaired by a member of the executive, Ms. Ulamila Kunatuba and she is spearheading that taskforce to talk to current staff as well as prospective employees of Water Authority to see what are the things that we can do in the Authority to encourage female participation.

As I said, the entry level where the graduates and apprentices come in, we have for the first time, are actually going to deliver on that and we will have some announcements on that to have apprentices coming to Water Authority with 50/50 gender balance. So we are hoping that by attracting them at the entry level, we will be able to retain some of those female staff into the taskforce and as they grow in the business, it will also improve our gender balance.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, just an additional question regarding your fleet. During the visitation, we had a request that you needed more vehicles for work to be carried out. Looking at your fleet in Tamavua, there is a bulk of twin cabs and carriers parked in that premises. Can you please explain the fleet section in your organisation?

MR. A. CHANAN.- Mr. Chairman, in terms of our fleet needs, as the Committee can appreciate, we have a national coverage and to deliver our services every year, Water Authority of Fiji staff travel an access of four million kilometres. That is a large amount of distance that we travel from our depots to wherever the broken main is or if there is a blocked intake up in the highlands. We have to do a lot of travel. Our current fleet, we only have 123 vehicles, and when we did a needs assessment and we put a submission, was in excess of 300 vehicles, which is similar to what EFL fleet makeup looks like.

Firstly, we are afraid of what we need, and secondly, the ones that we have, all of them barring a few, have done more than 200,000 kilometres on their odometer. What you see in Tamavua is effectively a vehicle graveyard because those vehicles have really gone beyond their used by date. Certainly, there is a need for us to have more capable and newer fleet so that we can continue to provide the service we provide.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I think because of the interest of time that we have and knowing that we will be meeting later probably earlier next year because we will be covering other reports, we will have to round off this session. I wish to sincerely thank you all for availing yourselves for the submission meeting. We thank you for your time and hope that you will avail yourselves if the Committee has any further queries on this matter.

The Committee adjourned at 11.50 a.m.

Appendix 3

Research Papers

**Annual Report Summary – Standing Committee on Natural Resources****Water Authority of Fiji January -July 2018 Annual Report****[Parliamentary Paper No: 28 of 2022]****1.0 Introduction**






This brief is provided to the Standing Committee on **Natural Resources** ("SC-NR" or "Committee") as requested through its Secretariat. This comparative analysis is a summary of the **Water Authority of Fiji's** (WAF) Financial Report on **Operating Expenses** for the first 7 Months Period Ended 31 July 2018.

2.0 Review of Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) Annual Report

Activities	Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) Jan-Jul 2018 AR ¹ Summary
Background	<p>Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) are responsible for providing quality drinking water and wastewater services to over 154,000 metered customers in urban Fiji, as well as establishing water supply systems in rural areas. The Authority's network includes over 4,932 kilometers of pipes, supplying more than 134,000 megalitres of treated water annually. Its service area spans 18,274 square kilometers across Fiji's 332 islands, of which 110 are inhabited.</p> <p>As of 2020, the Authority are in their 10th year of operation, serving over 829,110 Fijians who rely on WAF for their daily water needs. Clean water and sanitation are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6, as well as the Fijian National Development Plan, and enshrined as basic rights in Fiji's 2013 Constitution.</p> <p>Recognizing global and national challenges, the Authority's strategic plan prioritizes asset consolidation, cultural improvements, and financial sustainability, aiming to make us a "Utility of the Future."²</p>
Vision	Clean Water and Sanitation for a Better Life.
Mission	<p>WAF are committed to optimizing water and wastewater services through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resilience• Innovation• Capacity Building• Engaging Stakeholders• Modernization• Being Environmentally Focused• Safe Working Practices
Values	<p>W – we do the right thing.</p> <p>A – accountability: we are accountable for what we say and do.</p> <p>T – team: we work as one team.</p> <p>E – energy: we bring positive energy to whatever we do.</p>

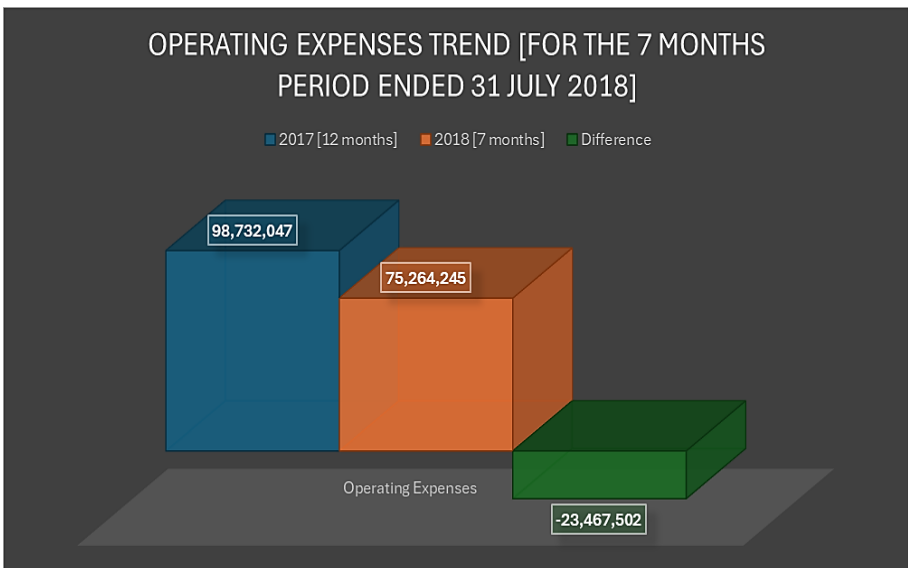
¹ AR – Annual Report

² Water Authority of Fiji, <https://waterauthority.com.fj/about/>

	R – respect – we respect each other, our customers, other utilities and government.
2018 Highlights	
	WAF staff quickly restored water supply after Tropical Cyclones Josie and Keni in April, which caused \$3.5 million in damages to WAF's infrastructure.
	The emergency water shutdown at Nagado in June was necessary to remove a defective Polyjet valve. If not addressed promptly, it could have caused catastrophic structural damage and a complete shutdown, leaving thousands of Fijians without water supply for up to two months.
	The completion of the Kiuva water main pipe replacement improved infrastructure capacity and sustainability, ensuring a better supply of clean and safe water for 900 residents .
	Non-Revenue Water (NRW) reduced to an all-time low of 29.3% in Quarter 2, 2018 from 52.2% in Quarter 3 2013 when WAF National NRW calculation started.
	The completion of a 650-meter under-sea pipeline connecting Vio Island to the Authority's Lautoka Depot provides the island's 230 residents with improved and more consistent access to water supply.

Financial Report [For The 7 Months Period Ended 31 July 2018]

Operating Expenses	Operating Expenses	2017 [12 months]	2018 [7 months]	Difference
	Chemical Usage	2,123,106	1,787,599	-335,507
	Directors fees	35,954	50,773	14,819
	Water and Electricity	22,532,211	12,163,934	-10,368,277
	Fuel and oil	1,891,873	1,477,599	-414,274
	Plant and equipment hire	14,192,790	14,875,673	682,883
	Professional fees	3,379,654	139,891	-3,239,763
	Repairs and maintenance	44,144,269	38,739,116	-5,405,153
	Telephone and communication	2,408,263	1,587,490	-820,773
	Travel & accommodation	915,033	1,081,564	166,531

	Land compensation	645,374	185,035	-460,339
	Insurance	877,000	466,996	-410,004
	Office supplies, printing, stationary and upkeep	625,163	455,192	-169,971
	Rent & security	1,748,123	539,340	-1,208,783
	Advertising & awareness	276,281	320,650	44,369
	National Fire Authority refunds	404,380	214,110	-190,270
	Others	2,532,573	1,179,283	-1,353,290
		98,732,047	75,264,245	-23,467,802
Operating Expenses Trend	<p>Graph 1: Operating Expenses Trend [For the 7 Months Period Ended 31 July 2018]</p>  <p>OPERATING EXPENSES TREND [FOR THE 7 MONTHS PERIOD ENDED 31 JULY 2018]</p> <p>■ 2017 [12 months] ■ 2018 [7 months] ■ Difference</p> <p>Operating Expenses</p>			
	<p>Interpretation</p> <p>The chart presents the operating expenses trend for WAF's 7 months ended July 31, 2018, comparing data from 2017 and 2018.</p> <p>For the 7 months period in 2018, the operating expenses were 75,264,245, while the operating expenses for the 12 months period in 2017 were 98,732,047.</p> <p>The chart indicates a significant decrease in operating expenses from 2017 to 2018. Specifically, the Authority spent 23,467,502 less in the first seven months of 2018 compared to the entire 2017 fiscal year.</p> <p>While this analysis covers only seven months of 2018, it shows that the company has achieved lower expenses compared to the full year of 2017, which could be a positive sign for stakeholders.</p>			



3.0 Sources

1. Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) January-July 2018 Annual Report, Accessed on 09 October 2024;
<https://www.parliament.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Water-Authority-of-Fiji-Annual-Report-January-to-July-2018.pdf>
2. Water Authority of Fiji (WAF), Accessed on 09 October 2024;
<https://waterauthority.com.fj/about/services/>

11 October 2024

Disclaimer

This Annual Report Summary was prepared to assist the Standing Committee on **Natural Resources** in its review of the **Water Authority of Fiji Jan-July 2018** Annual Report. This summary should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. Other sources and information should be consulted. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the information is accurate, the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji will not accept any liability for any loss or damage which may be incurred by any person acting in reliance upon the information. The Parliament of the Republic of Fiji accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. For further information please email: **Siteri Gaunalomani** on email siteri.gaunalomani@parliament.gov.fj or siteri.gaunalomani@legislature.gov.fj

Appendix 4

Photos







