



STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Consolidated Review Report of the Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources Annual Reports for 2021–2022 and 2022–2023



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
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Table of Contents

Chair’s Foreword	3-4
Acronyms.....	4
Introduction	4-5
Committee Remit and Composition.....	6
Procedure And Program.....	6-7
Committee Deliberations and Analysis	8-11
Committee’s Findings.....	8
Recommendations.....	8-9
Gender Analysis - SDG 5	10
SDG's	10-11
Conclusion	11
Members Signature	12
Appendices	13

Chairperson's Foreword



As the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, it is with great privilege that I present to Parliament the Committee's consolidated review report of the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources' Annual Reports for the period 2021-2022 and 2022 – 2023. The Standing Committee on Natural Resources remains duty-bound to provide robust oversight, ensuring accountability in promoting accountable sustainable management of our nation's critical land and mineral resources.

As part of our comprehensive review process of the Annual Reports, the Committee conducted an extensive site visit to various Ministry of Lands operations and project sites over a period of one week, from 19th to 23rd May 2025. This field engagement provided invaluable first-hand insight into the Ministry's operational realities, project implementation status, and the challenges faced on the ground. The site visits reinforced the importance of effective policy execution, resource management, and community engagement in achieving sustainable outcomes.

The Ministry's Annual Reports for the stated periods offer detailed accounts of sector performance, highlighting key achievements, challenges, and strategic priorities aligned with national development goals. Our review emphasizes the critical need for continued improvements in governance, financial oversight, and capacity building within the Ministry to enhance service delivery and resource optimization.

Through rigorous examination and stakeholder consultations, the Committee has formulated findings and recommendations aimed at strengthening transparency, promoting inclusive development, and ensuring the sustainable management of land and mineral resources in line with the country's broader sustainable development agenda.

I commend the Ministry for its efforts and urge sustained collaboration among all stakeholders to harness the full potential of our natural resources for the benefit of current and future generations.

It is my hope that this report will serve as a valuable reference for policymakers, development partners, and the public in advancing sound stewardship of our lands and mineral resources.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, I would like to thank the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources for their cooperation during this review. The Committee looks forward to continuing to work together to ensure that Fiji's natural resources are managed sustainably for the benefit of all Fijians.

At this juncture, I would like to take the opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to the Honourable Members who contributed to the production of this bipartisan report. These include

Hon. Kalaveti Ravu, Deputy Chairperson, Hon. Joseph Nand, Hon. Vijay Nand, Hon. Taito and the former member, Hon. Sachida Nand.

The Committee sincerely thanked the Secretariat for their dedicated support during the consolidated review of the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources' 2021–2022 and 2022-2023 Annual Report. Their professionalism and focus to detail were instrumental in the successful completion of the report.

I commend this Report to Parliament.



.....
Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna

Chairperson

Standing Committee on Natural Resources

ACRONYMS/GLOSSARY

CGA	Country Gender Assessment
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SO	Standing Committee on Natural Resources

1.0 Introduction

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

- SO, 109 (c) that the mandate of the Committee is to look into matters that relate to agriculture, forests, fisheries, land, minerals, environment, water, and marine services.
- SO, 110 (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, budget, rationalization, restructuring, functioning, organization, structure, and policy formulation.

The Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources is a cornerstone institution in Fiji's efforts to sustainably manage and develop the country's invaluable land and mineral assets. These

resources are not only critical to economic growth but also play a significant role in social development and environmental conservation.

The Annual Reports for the fiscal years 2021–2022 and 2022–2023 offer a comprehensive overview of the Ministry’s initiatives, achievements, and challenges within this period, reflecting its strategic priorities and operational focus.

The reports detail the Ministry’s key functions, including land administration, surveying, mineral exploration, resource licensing, policy formulation, and regulatory enforcement. These activities are instrumental in ensuring the equitable allocation, efficient use, and protection of Fiji’s natural resources. They also align with the broader national development agenda, including sustainable development goals, climate resilience, and community empowerment.

In fulfilling its parliamentary oversight mandate, the Standing Committee on Natural Resources undertook a detailed review of these Annual Reports. Complementing this desk review, the Committee conducted an extensive site visit over the course of one week, from 19th to 23rd May 2025. This site visit involved on-the-ground assessments of several Ministry-operated projects and facilities across different regions. The visit provided Committee members with critical firsthand knowledge of operational realities, including successes, resource constraints, and logistical challenges faced by the Ministry.

The direct engagement with Ministry officials and local stakeholders during the site visit enabled the Committee to better evaluate the effectiveness of policy implementation and service delivery. It also underscored the importance of continued investment in capacity building, technological advancement, and stakeholder collaboration to enhance the sector’s performance.

The Committee’s findings from the review and site visits have informed the recommendations aimed at strengthening governance, transparency, and sustainability within the Ministry. We recognize the Ministry’s efforts in advancing land and mineral resource management and encourage ongoing improvements to maximize benefits for all Fijians, both now and for future generations.

It is our hope that this consolidated report will contribute to more informed policy decisions, improved operational efficiency, and increased public confidence in the management of Fiji’s natural resources.

2.0 Committee Remit and Composition

2.1 Committee Remit

Under Standing Order 109 (c) of the Parliament of Fiji, the Standing Committee on Natural Resources is mandated to perform the following functions:

Scrutinize government departments and agencies, review annual reports, examine policies and legislations, monitor resource management programs, conduct public consultations, investigate issues and challenges, review budget allocations, and report to parliament its findings and recommendations for improvements.



Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna
Chairperson
Assistant Minister for Agriculture



Hon. Kalaveti Vodo Ravu
Deputy Chairperson
Government MP



Hon. Joseph Nand
Opposition MP



Hon. Taito Rokomatu
G11 Government MP



Hon. Vijay Nath
Opposition MP

2.1 Procedure and Program

As part of its ongoing review program, the Standing Committee on Natural Resources undertook an in-depth evaluation of the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources annual reports for the period 2021-2022 and 2022 – 2023. This review was essential for assessing

the ministry's performance, identifying challenges, and providing recommendations aimed at improving the management of Fiji's land and mineral resources. The committee's objective was to ensure that the ministry's operations align with the nation's broader development goals and to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of resource management.

The committee's review program began with a detailed assessment of the ministry's annual report for 2021-2022 and 2022 – 2023 which provided an overview of its achievements, challenges, and key activities. This report highlighted the ministry's focus on land administration, mineral resource management, and environmental sustainability, as well as its ongoing efforts to address land tenure issues, resolve resource conflicts, and promote sustainable development practices.

On Monday, 17th February 2025, the Ministry's executives appeared before the Committee in Parliament to present their submissions on the 2021–2022 Annual Report, and they appeared again on Tuesday, 27th May 2025 to present the submissions for the 2022–2023 Annual Report. The session was productive, as it allowed the committee members to ask clarifying questions, seek further details on key issues, and gain a deeper understanding of the ministry's operations. The discussions also provided valuable insights into the ministry's efforts to address the challenges it faces and its plans for the future.

Following the presentation, the committee reviewed all the information provided, including the ministry's submissions and the responses to the committee's questions. The committee also sought additional input from the Parliament Research Unit, which conducted an analysis of the ministry's performance and provided key findings to support the review process. This collaborative effort ensured that the committee's final report was comprehensive, well-informed, and based on the most accurate and up-to-date information available.

The outcome of the review program was a detailed report, which includes the committee's observations, recommendations, and suggested improvements for the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources. The report aims to support the ministry in enhancing its capacity to manage Fiji's land and mineral resources effectively, ensuring that they contribute to the country's sustainable development while benefiting all Fijians.

In conclusion, the committee remains committed to its role in scrutinizing the ministry's performance and ensuring that its actions align with the best interests of the Fijian people and the country's long-term development goals.

Copies of written and oral submissions were received from the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources 2021-2022 and 2022 -2023 annual reports.

2.2 Evidence and Advice Received - Please Refer to Annexures 1 – 4

3.0 Committee Deliberation and Analysis

3.1 Committee Findings

- 3.1.1** The committee noted that better enforcement of state land lease conditions is necessary to minimize poor utilization and non-productive output from some of the leased state land.
- 3.1.2** The committee noted that the ministry had its legislation, regulations, and policies in place, however, the ministry did not highlight the activities or programs enforced under these legislations.
- 3.1.3** The Committee noted that weaknesses in data management systems have hindered effective decision-making and monitoring, leading to inefficiencies in the ministry's operations and delayed responses to emerging issues.
- 3.1.4** The committee noted the lack of evidence of the Ministry working in collaboration with other government agencies on the utilization and development of state land.
- 3.1.5** The committee noted the lack of information on the Ministry's activities on the development of state lands for various uses.
- 3.1.6** The committee noted that the Ministry exceeded its target of land registrations by 758. The target being set was 500 and the actual registration number was 1258.
- 3.1.7** The committee noted the lack of information on the land bank in the annual report.
- 3.1.8** The committee noted that the Ministry has an unqualified audit report for the period under review.
- 3.1.9** The committee noted high staff turnover in the Ministry from 2021 to 2023, which affected its ability to provide effective services.

4.0 COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Committee recommends strengthening monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with all lease conditions, thereby promoting better utilization and productivity of state land.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Committee recommends that the ministry provide a detailed report on its programs, including objectives, progress, challenges, and outcomes, while establishing a monitoring framework to ensure alignment with sustainable land management goals.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Committee recommends that the Ministry improve its data management systems by investing in modern technology and training staff to ensure timely, accurate information for effective decision-making and monitoring.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources improve collaboration with other government agencies by creating formal partnerships and a cross agency working group. Regular progress updates should be provided to ensure coordinated and sustainable state land development.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Committee recommends that the ministry provides a detailed report on state land development activities, including progress, challenges, and solutions for efficient and sustainable use.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Committee recommends that the Ministry review the reasons for exceeding the land registration target to make sure this success continues. It also advises keeping enough staff and resources to maintain or improve registration numbers while ensuring accurate and reliable records.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Committee recommends that future annual reports include detailed information on the land bank, such as total land area, current use, ownership, and plans for development or redistribution. The Ministry should also update on how effectively the land bank supports national development and efficient use of state land.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Committee recommends that the ministry maintain its strong financial management practices, address any audit findings, and strengthen internal controls to ensure continued transparency and accountability.

RECOMMENDATION 9

The Committee recommends that the ministry develop a staff retention strategy focusing on engagement, professional development, career progression, and competitive compensation to reduce high turnover.

5.0 Gender Analysis – SDG 5

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”.*

The Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources' 2021–2022, 2021 - 2023 Annual Report does not specifically include a gender report or detailed gender-disaggregated data. However, the Ministry has demonstrated a commitment to gender equality through various initiatives.

Notably, Ms. Irena Nayacalevu was appointed as the first female Director of Lands in July 2020, marking a significant milestone in the Ministry's leadership structure. Her appointment reflects the Ministry's recognition of the importance of gender diversity in leadership roles.

Additionally, the Fijian Government has undertaken broader efforts to promote gender equality across all sectors, including land and resource management. The development of the Country Gender Assessment aims to provide a comprehensive overview of gender issues in various sectors, including land and environment, to inform evidence-based policies and programs.

While the Ministry's annual report may not explicitly address gender-related outcomes, these initiatives indicate an ongoing commitment to integrating gender considerations into its operations and policies.

6.0 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources' 2021–2022 and 2022 – 2023 Annual Report does not explicitly list the Sustainable Development Goals it aligns with. However, based on the Ministry's activities and initiatives, several SDGs are implicitly addressed:

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

The Ministry's efforts in drilling boreholes to supply water to communities contribute to this goal.

SDG 15: Life on Land

The Ministry's work in land management and conservation supports the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

The Ministry's focus on transparency and accountability in land and mineral resource management aligns with this goal.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Collaborations with various stakeholders enhance the Ministry's capacity to achieve sustainable development.

7.0 Conclusion

The Standing Committee, after its review of the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources 2021–2022 and 2022 - 2023 Annual Reports, acknowledges the Ministry's continued efforts in the sustainable management of land and mineral resources. The Committee notes the progress made in improving access to land services, advancing land development, and promoting responsible mineral exploration in line with national priorities and sustainable development goals.

However, the Committee also highlights the need for strengthened institutional capacity, improved data management systems, and enhanced public engagement in land-related matters. These improvements are essential for ensuring transparency, efficiency, and equity in the administration of land and mineral resources.

The Committee commends the Ministry for its commitment to service delivery and encourages continued focus on policy implementation, inter-agency coordination, and gender inclusivity in its operations.

Accordingly, the Committee recommends that Parliament takes note of the Ministry's achievements and challenges as outlined in this report.

Members Signature:

We, as Members of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources do concur with the content of this report.

Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna
Chairperson
Assistant Minister for Agriculture



Hon. Kalaveti Ravu



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Hon. Josheph Nand



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Hon. Taito Rokomatu



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Hon. Vijay Nath



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APPENDICES

1) WRITTEN SUBMISSION BY

2) VERBATIM REPORT

3) RESEARCH PAPERS

4) SUBMISSION PHOTOS

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Written Submission by the
Ministry of Lands and Mineral
Resources August 2021-July
2022 and 2022 – 2023 Annual
Report

MEMORANDUM

From: The Permanent Secretary for Lands & Mineral Resources **Phone:** 3313555

To: The Chairperson – Parliament Standing Committee **Date:** 05.02.2025
on Natural Resources

Subject: MINISTRY RESPONSE TO THE 1 AUGUST 2021 – 31 JULY 2022
MINISTRY OF LANDS AND MINERAL RESOURCES ANNUAL
REPORT SCRUTINY

- 1.0 The Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources has been requested by your high office to provide responses to the above subject through a correspondence dated 27 January 2025.
- 2.0 Accordingly, please find attached the Ministry response submitted for your consideration.
- 3.0 We will be glad to provide assistance should you require further clarifications.

Thank you.



Paula N.B. Cirikiyasawa
Permanent Secretary



STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

**Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources on 01st August
2021 – 31st July 2022 Annual Report Scrutiny**

No.	Question	Response
1.	Letter to Minister Can the Ministry explain why the letter to the Minister dated 04 th March 2024 REFERRED TO Hon. Jone Usamate as the Minister when the fact remains that on that particular date Hon. Filimone Vosarogo was the Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources?	The letter to Minister dated 4 th March 2024 is addressed to the then Minister of Lands and Mineral Resources for Financial Year August 2021 to July 2022 who was Mr Usamate. Hon. Vosarogo was appointed as Minister for Lands & Mineral Resources on December 24 2022.
2.	Lands Department Performance Can the Ministry please elaborate on how effectively the Ministry is monitoring the use of leased state lands for agriculture, industrial development, housing or others and what measures do they have in place for people or institutions who failed to utilise the land within the specified timeframe? a) Is the utilisation clause within the lease condition followed and how is it monitored? b) Does the Ministry have any examples of land being taken back from lessees for failure to utilize or develop the land within the specified time?	a) All state lease issued are guided and protected by the lease conditions that is aligned to the State Lands Act. The State Lands Act specifically specifies the use of all land leased to state that is in accordance with their approved zoning. If there are any deviations, from these lease conditions, it is regarded as a breach and the law directs that breach notices to be issued accordingly. b) The Ministry has in the past, cancelled some leases for lessees who failed to adhere to the lease conditions. As mentioned above, a notice is given and if there are failures to make remedies to the breach notices, this will result in the cancellation of leases by re-entry.
3.	Can the Ministry please explain what percentage of the state land is still to be developed to be leased out to proper utilisation?	The Ministry currently has a Landuse Master Plan Project that aims to guide the land usage for State Land in Fiji. On the completion of this project, the Ministry will be in a better position to better plan its development approvals along with establishing how much of State Land is unleased and unutilised.
4.	How does the Ministry set up its target figures as shown in Table 1.	In the Ministry plan documents, the targets for the financial year are structured in a way that notes the achievements of the previous financial year and is aligned to the goals and plans for the new year.
5.	Survey Division Achievements Can the Ministry please elaborate more on the completed target outputs?	Survey plan approval – This is the final product of any survey activity. Thereafter, a lease/title can be submitted for registration with Registrar of Titles. With the target of 240, the

Ministry was able to achieve a total of 838 survey plans that was approved. These are survey plans lodged by private and government surveyors.

Upgrade of Geodetic Datum – Letter of request was sent to Geoscience Australia through SPC seeking technical assistance in the processing of Meta data using high tech software in order to define the new datum for Fiji.

Maintenance work continued for the 8 Continuous Operating Reference Systems (CORS) i.e Labasa, Nabouwalu, Taveuni, Koro, Kadavu, Lakeba, Ono I Lau and Rotuma fixing internet connectivity and power failure.

Survey of Mahogany Leases – There are 28 leases in Nukurua and 16 leases in Sawakasa Mahogany Plantations. Each year the target to demarcate and survey individual lease boundary is set out according to the allocated budget. The demarcation and survey is time-consuming due to the terrain geographical locations of the lease lot. The demarcation and survey (field work) for the 6 leases was completed. The survey plan was drawn, reports were prepared and lodged to Plan Assessment Unit for assessment and approval. Once the survey plan is thoroughly assessed, it will then be processed for approval by the Surveyor General. The assessment and approval of the survey plan takes some time because other stakeholder involvement is involved such as Department of Town and Country Planning, also requires mandatory approval.

Maintenance of Existing Subdivision – The Ministry has existing subdivision that was developed decade ago. The maintenance work is mainly to upgrade deteriorating access, footpath, drainage system and retaining wall.

Survey Equipment Calibration – All survey equipment used by Surveyors in Fiji are tested on standard baseline (survey marks) to test its reliability accuracy in terms of its distance measurement and bearings.

6.	<p>Challenges and Way Forward</p> <p>Can the Ministry please explain the challenges and way forward for staff capacity as shown in the tabled provided?</p>	<p>Staff turnover is an on-going challenge since staff leave Ministry after obtaining registration for lucrative remuneration and benefits mostly in the private sector. Incentives such as retention policy and locum are currently being revisited for retention and complemented with in-house and on job trainings.</p>
7.	<p>Performance Against Key Targets</p> <p>The Ministry's Annual Report indicates that a target was set to increase the number of land leases issued in the 2021-2022 period.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Can the Ministry provide the specific number of land leases granted during this period, How does this compare to the target set at the beginning of the year? What factors contributed to achieving or missing this target? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Specifically for land lease being granted, a total number of 761 leases was granted. The Ministry's target for Stamping & Registration of Leases/Licenses & other related legal documents is 100% registration at titles office. With its submission to titles office the Ministry had achieved 100% registration of documents registered at titles. Teamwork, in-house training and having a lands officer based at titles office.
8.	<p>Mineral Resources and Revenue Generation</p> <p>In the Annual Report, the Ministry mentions the number of active mining licenses issued during the 2021-2022 period.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Can the Ministry provide a detailed breakdown of the types of minerals covered by these licenses and the estimated contribution of these licenses to the national economy in terms of revenue generation? What is the Ministry doing to rejuvenate the disturbed land affected by some of the surface mining programs in the past? Can the Ministry provide a list of resource owners who are in partnership with investors? Apart from royalties, what other benefits are provided to the LOUs? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> It is not license but Special Mining Leases – 7 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Gold & Silver – 5 Bauxite – 1 Magnetite Iron Sand – 1 The total contribution was \$116, 231,108.50. There is only one mining site under rehabilitation which is for Bauxite extraction in Nawailevu. As per the approved rehabilitation plan, the area has been reforested with pine plantation for the landowners. The Department periodically monitors the progress of this site. The Ministry does not have records of such a venture between the resource owners and investors. Other benefits to LOU's include Employment, Scholarships, Laptops, Livestock, Water Tank Containers, Agricultural Planting materials & equipment's, Road Upgrade, Community Hall Upgrade, Assist in Community Fundraisings, Funeral Contribution & Water Supply Projects.

9.	<p>Environmental Compliance in Mining Operations</p> <p>The report notes the Ministry's oversight of mining activities, particularly with regard to environmental sustainability. How many mining operations were audited for compliance with environmental safeguards in the 2021-2022 period, and what were the findings from these audits?</p>	<p>No environmental audits were undertaken for the mentioned period 2021 – 2022. However, the Department has plans in place to ensure compliance with relevant legislation for all mining operations. The 7 mining operations were inspected [audited] on quarterly basis for safety and environmental compliance.</p> <p>From the inspections, it has been noted that the mining operations are not 100% compliance, especially in terms of safety and best practices and are given ample time to rectify those issues. These mining operations did not record any major environmental breaches.</p>
10.	<p>Land Use Policy and Development</p> <p>The Annual Report mentions efforts to streamline land use policies to enhance economic development.</p> <p>a) Can the Ministry elaborate on how these policy changes have impacted land use in the tourism sector, particularly in coastal areas?</p> <p>b) Were there any new regulations or initiatives introduced between August 2021 and July 2022 to protect these areas?</p>	<p>A land use policy on coastal areas for tourism purposes is non-existent at the moment.</p> <p>To assist the landowners the Ministry will formulate two policies in next year the</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Risk management policy and 2) Gradiences and mediation policy
11.	<p>Technological Advancements and Digitization</p> <p>The Annual Report mentions ongoing efforts to digitize land management records.</p> <p>a) Can the Ministry provide an update on the status of this digital transition?</p> <p>b) Specifically, how many land titles and lease agreements have been successfully digitized as of July 2022,</p> <p>c) and what improvements in efficiency or transparency have been observed?</p> <p>d) What is the accuracy level of the Vanuaview program, and does it cover all developed land in Fiji?</p>	<p>a) The Ministry's ongoing effort to digitize land records through the Scanning of lease files is continuing and to date (2025), 12,000 files has been scanned. Out of the three divisions, the Divisional Lands Office North (DLON) has been completed. In addition, State Land Portal will be launched in March 2025.</p> <p>b) 12000 state lease files have been scanned and verified (2025).</p> <p>c) Accessibility of file information, transparency and accountability in terms of data input and verification, reliable and accurate information, standardised operating procedure (SOP).</p> <p>d) The Vanua View Online covers approved surveyed plans and information provided by data custodians. Accuracy level differs depending on the technology used to capture spatial information. For cadastral, it ranges from +/- 0.1 millimetre – 5 millimetres.</p>

12.	<p>GEOLOGICAL SERVICES DIVISION - Hydrology – Groundwater Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Why were the target not achieved? b) How effective is their groundwater program? c) What is the minimal level of groundwater retention required to ensure sustainable harvesting whilst ensuring minimal environmental impact? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Hydrogeology Section is responsible for the survey and monitoring of groundwater for water supply, and other activities such as the supervision of all drilling projects to ensure compliance to standards and instructions from the Hydrogeologist. At any given time, there would be at least three major activities running concurrently. The 13 technical staff of the Section are assigned to these field works, and it is apparent that there are not enough staff available to ensure all are undertaken effectively. The major activities and the required staff and vehicles are as follows. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Groundwater investigations – 8 staff and 2 vehicles; ii. Pumping tests – 6 staffs and 2 vehicles; iii. Drilling supervision – 1 staff per rig for 4 drilling rigs; and iv. Groundwater monitoring - 1 trip per month for Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, 2 staff and 1 vehicle. <p>From above, it is clear that the Section does not have enough personnel for all activities. Therefore, groundwater monitoring is usually overlooked as the least priority.</p> <p>Also, the Section is allocated only two vehicles and is expected to undertake and complete all targets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) Groundwater monitoring in recent years has not been very effective as the unachieved months result in large gaps in the monitoring data. To address this, the Section had procured data loggers in 2023-2024 that will be installed in monitoring boreholes and collect data at predetermined intervals, such as every 10 minutes, 30 mins, 1 hour, 12 hours etc. This ensures continuous and accurate data that should detect changes in the aquifer because of groundwater abstraction, climate change or a combination of both. Data from these devices can be retrieved every month, 3 months or 6 months depending on the desired settings. c) All aquifers have the capacity to store groundwater, this fluctuates in response to seasonal changes and impacts. The recharge into these aquifers normally equals the discharge that supports rivers, streams and wetlands.
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		Any abstraction is a disruption of this, it is prudent that a small percentage of this recharge is calculated to be the allowable, sustainable total abstraction volume for an aquifer in a year. This means that the total aquifer storage should not be affected, and abstraction is determined from total annual recharge for an aquifer. If a monitoring borehole shows declining trend in the water levels over the years, this means that groundwater abstraction is tapping into the storage of an aquifer. If there is no pumping but water levels still decline, this would be the impact of climate change.
13.	Financial Management and Budget Allocations The Annual Report outlines the Ministry's financial performance. a) Can the Ministry provide in a table form the budgetary allocation and utilization of funds under each seg?	Response is appended as Annexure 1 .
14.	Public Engagement and Stakeholder Involvement The report notes increased engagement with local communities and stakeholders regarding land use and mineral resource management. a) Can the Ministry provide details on the number of consultations held with landowners and other community groups during the year, b) and what were the outcomes of these consultations?	One of the major engagements with the landowners and other communities are through the river gravel extraction license and foreshore leases/licenses. a. Listed below are the details of the number of consultations held with the landowners and other communities. 1. There were 15 consultations attended to in 2024 b. The outcome of the consultations are as follows: 1. 66.67% of awareness of foreshore processes and applications. 2. 13.33% of the consented waiver of fishing rights form. 3. 20% of the non-consented waiver of fishing rights form due to certain reasons such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compensation payment before signing of the waiver form; • Partnership with the developers; and • Lack of members consent to the development proposition.
15.	Climate Change and Land Management a) Considering the ongoing impacts of climate, what efforts are being undertaken by the Ministry to mitigate these. b) How many projects or initiatives were launched between August 2021 and July 2022 to promote climate resilience	a) Consideration for Climate Change impacts are reflected into the permitting process for mineral licenses and leases where environment impact assessment remains a mandatory requirement for mining leases. The Amex Ba magnetite mine is planned in such a way that it improves river hydrology at Ba. Groundwater development programmes are also implemented with

	in land use planning, particularly in coastal or flood-prone areas?	<p>consideration of climate change impacts because such resource is also vulnerable to climate change. The Ministry is heavily involved in relocation programmes where it is member of the steering committee as well as the Task Force on Relocation and Displacement Programmes, development of SOP for planned relocation and CRVAM tool.</p> <p>The efforts done by the Foreshore Unit are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Process the request from organisations and academic institutes for mangrove planting along the foreshore area. 2. Issuance of foreshore lease – conservation of mangrove lease (Navakavu Sanctuary) and marine protected area (Naitouba and Naivuatolu MPA). <p>b) The mandate of the Mineral Department indirectly implements projects to promote climate resilience in land use planning but contributes in coastal, landslide and geotechnical assessments and surveys to provide geoscientific data and information to support the initiatives and implementation of the projects.</p> <p>The Lands Department is not directly involved in the climate change initiatives and projects as this is under the jurisdiction of Director of Climate Change and the Department only promotes community engagements for mangrove planting.</p>
16.	<p>Human Resource Development and Capacity Building</p> <p>The Annual Report highlights ongoing training and development programs for Ministry staff. Does the Ministry have a corporate plan that is inclusive of its Human Resources Development Plan linking it to the Ministry's medium- and long-term objectives?</p>	<p>No, however the Ministry has a Strategic Workforce Plan and a Training Plan that addresses training gaps and needs of the different professions within the Ministry. Based on these, staff are identified to undertake local and overseas capacity building opportunities.</p>
17.	<p>a) What is the effectiveness of the Land Bank program?</p> <p>b) Do the LOUs benefit from the land bank?</p>	<p>a) The Land Bank programme provides continuous consultation and public awareness including visitations to the landowning units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOU grievances are attended to and resolved as and when issues arise; • The Division assists in the upgrade of the living standard and livelihood of LOU's;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Issuance of memorandum of leases; and• So far, the Ministry under the land use division has issued 98 leases till date. <p>b) The landowning units benefits from the Land Bank through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 100 per cent returns are released to the LOU's;• There are continuous dialogues and communication between the LOU's and the Ministry;• Assistance is provided to the LOUs in compiling their financial statements, providing financial literacy to LOU's to make informed financial decisions; and• Encouraging the LOU's to utilise their vacant land instead of lying idle.
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2022-2023 Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources Annual Report Scrutiny - Response

No.	Question	Response																																									
1.	<p>LAND SURVEYORS</p> <p>The Committee is seeking information on the status of the backlog of files related to land surveyors in the surveying unit. Could the Ministry kindly provide an update on this matter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Ministry is currently prioritizing the survey of expired leases and the formalization of illegal subdivisions across all four divisions. Due to the vast geographic coverage required, the Ministry has decentralized its survey operations by establishing dedicated offices in Nadi and Rakiraki in the Western Division.• This initiative allows survey teams to be close to their respective area of service delivery, spend more time on these respective areas, which should improve the coordination and expediting of service deliveries. As a result, the Ministry anticipates a significant reduction on pending works.																																									
	<p>Supplementary Questions</p> <p>a) Could the Ministry provide a detailed breakdown of the total number of survey plans approved by tenure and zone for the 2022–2023 period, as outlined on page 10 of the report?</p> <p>b) What are the key factors influencing the approval or delay of survey plans in specific zones or tenures?</p>	<table><tr><th colspan="7">2022 – 2023 Fiscal Year Survey Plan Approval</th></tr><tr><th>Tenure</th><th>Total Number of Plans Approved</th><th>Residential Lots</th><th>Commercial Lots</th><th>Agricultural lots</th><th>Civic Lots</th><th>Industrial Lots</th></tr><tr><td>Freehold</td><td>194</td><td>621</td><td>21</td><td>115</td><td>9</td><td>7</td></tr><tr><td>State Land</td><td>83</td><td>188</td><td>4</td><td>39</td><td>4</td><td>12</td></tr><tr><td>iTaukei Land</td><td>586</td><td>859</td><td>33</td><td>26</td><td>17</td><td>26</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>863</td><td>1668</td><td>58</td><td>180</td><td>30</td><td>45</td></tr></table> <p>Prior to the approval of any survey plan, the lessee, land developer, or investor must comply with all development conditions imposed by the Department of Town and Country Planning. These conditions vary depending on the zoning and intended land use of the subdivision.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roads must be constructed to the standards of the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) or the relevant municipal council;• Water infrastructure must meet Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) requirements;• Fire hydrants must be installed in accordance with National Fire Authority (NFA) standards; and• Drainage systems must comply with the standards set by the local council. <p>Once all development works are completed and verified that they have met the standards of the relevant approving agencies, a Compliance Certificate is issued by the municipal council or authority governing</p>	2022 – 2023 Fiscal Year Survey Plan Approval							Tenure	Total Number of Plans Approved	Residential Lots	Commercial Lots	Agricultural lots	Civic Lots	Industrial Lots	Freehold	194	621	21	115	9	7	State Land	83	188	4	39	4	12	iTaukei Land	586	859	33	26	17	26	Total	863	1668	58	180	30
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		<p>the subdivision area. This Certificate must be submitted along with the survey plan to initiate the assessment and approval process.</p> <p>The submission of the Compliance Certificate serves as the confirmation that the subdivision has met all required development conditions. Following this, the survey plan is assessed for compliance with survey regulations. If found satisfactory, the plan is forwarded to the Director of Town and Country Planning (DTCP) for clearance. Upon receiving clearance, the survey plan can proceed to obtain final approval.</p> <p><u>Key Delays:</u></p> <p>The primary reason for the delay lies on the '<i>non-compliance with development standards</i>'. Incomplete or substandard works that do not meet agency requirements prevent the issuance of the Compliance Certificate, thus delaying the entire survey approval process.</p>
2.	<p>Gender Analysis</p> <p>The Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources has been working on various land management and mineral resource policies and projects for the 2022-2023 period. How has the Ministry incorporated gender considerations into these policies and projects, and what measures have been taken to ensure equal participation and opportunities for women in these sectors?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training – the Ministry has been sending female staffs for training based on merit. • Empowerment – encouraging females for registration on their respective field • Increase in female participant in specialist field (surveyors, geologist, hydrogeologist) and several of them have elevated into management positions. • The Ministry's Hydrogeology Division have undertaken to improve their gender record for services provided in local communities through the adoption of a community benefit register. The register records the data of both females and males that benefit for the provision of a water source or the establishment of a borehole in their community.
3.	<p>Review of the Mines and the River and Streams Act.</p>	<p>The Mining Act currently in use was enacted in 1965 with the most recent amendments to the Regulations made in 2016 (Revised Edition of the Laws – Consequential Amendments). The review of the Mining Act commenced in 1998 and currently is in the 11th draft produced in 2006 and is known as the Mineral Exploration & Exploitation Bill (MEEB). In 2013, the American Bar Association (ABA)</p>

	<p>The Ministry is currently overseeing the review process for the Mines under the Mining Act (Cap 146) and the Rivers and Streams Act of 11th March 1882.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the Ministry provide an update on the current status of this review? 	<p>undertook further review of the Bill however their recommendations were not formally accepted. In 2018, the Fijian government collaborated with Intergovernmental forum on Mining (IGF) to lead review of the legislations. The Mining Policy Framework (MPF) was completed in 2022, and the report was validated in 2025.</p> <p>The Director of Mines had an online meeting with IGF to discuss the approach by IGF to review the MEEB as well as the Mineral Policy the actual review work by IGF which is to be completed by December 2025. The Ministry has also submitted an information paper to Cabinet in this regard.</p>
4.	<p>Exploration</p> <p>The Ministry has been overseeing exploration-related payouts to Landowner Units (LOUs) for the period 2022–2023. Can the Ministry provide details on these payouts, including any new payments issued?</p>	<p>There are no payouts for mineral exploration at present only for mining</p>
5.	<p>Illegal Extraction of Gravel</p> <p>The issue of illegal extraction of gravel has been a growing concern. Can the Ministry please provide an update on the current status of this issue?</p>	<p>The Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources has created 4 posts specifically for the administration and management of River Gravel & Aggregate in Fiji. They are Technical Assistant - Natural Resource Development Officers posts with their salary bracket beginning from \$20,056. Their main role is to provide regular monitoring of river gravel licensed and expired licensed sites. This is to help reduce or eliminate possible illegal river gravel extractions. The contractors and suppliers of river aggregate on many occasions return to expired sites to access supplies due to high quality of river aggregate from these sites.</p>
6.	<p>Page 11 -Nukurua Mahogany</p> <p>A survey was conducted at the Nukurua Mahogany site as part of the 2022-2023 annual report. Can the Ministry please elaborate further on the findings of this survey?</p>	<p>The Nukurua Mahogany Plantation comprises 28 leases which are located within the Tikina of Vugalei, Tailevu. The survey was part of the 2022–2023 fiscal year activity which involved the demarcation and surveying of individual lease boundaries within the plantation. Out of the 28 leases, 21 leases were surveyed (75% completion).</p> <p>The primary objective of this exercise is to facilitate the issuance of registered leases to the Fiji Hardwood Corporation for each lot. This will ensure that landowners receive accurate lease payments,</p>

		<p>which are determined based on the area specified in the approved survey plans.</p> <p>One of the major challenges encountered during the survey was the inaccessibility of many individual lease sites. Survey teams were required to trek between 2 to 4 hours to reach certain locations, significantly reducing the time available for actual surveying work. This has impacted overall progress.</p> <p>To address these challenges, there is a need for increased support in the form of funding, equipment, and human resources. These additional resources would greatly enhance the efficiency and timeliness of the project.</p> <p>The Ministry is aiming to complete the full survey of the Nukurua Mahogany leases within the 2024–2025 fiscal year.</p>
7.	The payment of premiums is an important aspect of land management. Can the Ministry please explain how premiums are calculated and paid against the total number of acres of land?	Premium is an upfront 'one-off' payment to secure State Leases. This is a policy requirement. It is formulated based and charged on 20% of unimproved capital value of land; (UCV) which is land value in its natural state. The rate adopted is based on prevailing markets at time of issuance of lease.
8.	Page 2 – The Ministry has reported collecting \$23 million, surpassing the \$16 million target. Can the Ministry please explain how this excess was achieved	The Ministry collected a total revenue of \$23m during this financial year. Breakdown of the revenue collected is attached.

MINISTRY OF LANDS AND MINERAL RESOURCES
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JULY 2023

	Notes (3)	31 July 2023 (\$)	31 July 2022 (\$)
REVENUE			
State Revenue			
Land and Property Rent	3a	16,410,419	16,727,941
Fees Charges, Fine and Penalties	3b	789,116	1,655,858
Revenue from Surveys & Sales of Navigation	3c	109,625	510,334
License	3d	25,865	24,987
Sale of Publications		258	4,482
Sale of Photographs		18	120
Mining Fees		61,959	129,631
Chemical		-	-
Commission		5,989	2,218
Valuation Fees		232	12,222
Total State Revenue		17,403,481	19,067,793
Agency Revenue			
Miscellaneous		5,685,414	1,521,697
Total Revenue		23,088,895	20,589,490

9. **Page 2 – Summary of Boreholes**
A summary of the boreholes has been provided in the annual report. Can the Ministry please provide more details on the construction of the six boreholes

NO.	Community	District / Province	Depth (m)	Maximum yield (m³/day)	Sustainable pumping rate (L/s)	Daily yield (m³)	Daily demand (m³)	Population	Household	Storage tanks capacity (m³)
i.	Karoko Village	Tunuloa, Cakaudrove	40	259	2	58	53	534	99	40
ii.	Nabukelevu-I-Ra	Nabukelevu, Kadavu	44	69	1	29	30	300	90	20

ii.	Namata Primary School	Wai, Nadroga	36	86	1	29	7	73	9	20
v.	Savusavu-Lailai Settlement	Wai, Nadroga	12	173	2	58	14	138	28	20
v.	Qelemumumu Village & Raranikawai Settlement	Labasa, Macuata	50	50	3	86	46	458	59	50
vi.	Vunisavisavi Village	Cakaudrove, Cakaudrove	32	32	1	29	8	80	22	20

- All boreholes are completed in compliance with the minimum required standards that are acceptable across the world:
 - All boreholes were drilled into the saturated zones of the subsurface, as per the recommendations from the geophysics surveys
 - All boreholes are fitted with pressure-rated PVC pipes
 - Slotted PVC's were installed in the saturated zone with the rest of the borehole completed with blank PVC's
 - A filter pack comprising of clean, well-rounded river gravels is installed in the annulus of the well (space between the PVC pipe and the well wall)
 - The well is cement grouted from the hard rock to the surface, this is the sanitary seal protecting the groundwater from surface contamination
 - All wells have been tested for quantity and quality, and have been disinfected prior to use
- The design of all rural water supply system is approved by the PS PWMST, in accordance with the Rural Water Supply Policy 2022.
- All borehole water supply systems are handed over to the communities during the commissioning.

10. **Page 8 – Review of the old legislations**

Review of State Lands Act 1945

The review of the State Lands Act 1945 has been approved by Cabinet on 20/05/2025.

	<p>The Committee appreciates the Ministry's continued efforts in reviewing existing legal frameworks. Stakeholders remain interested in understanding the progress related to the review or revision of the old legislation.</p> <p>Can the Ministry please provide an update on the current status of the old legislation and indicate whether any reforms or amendments are planned in the near future?</p>	<p>The Ministry now awaits the Cabinet Decision before the accrual review takes place. The Minister of Lands and Mineral Resources has also advised the team on the need to adhere to strict timelines that will be required.</p> <p><u>Review of Mining Act 1965</u></p> <p>Following Cabinet approval, the review of this Act is currently being undertaken with the engagement of the IGF, the consultant. Public consultation will soon be carried out where views and submissions will be considered.</p>																							
11.	<p>Page 10</p> <p>The Ministry is requested to provide a detailed summary of the available land within each district, based on the land surveys it has conducted.</p> <p>Can this information be presented in a table format for ease of reference?</p>	<table><tr><th></th><th>Lots</th><th>Area</th><th>Percentage (Vacant State Land)</th></tr><tr><td>1. Western Division</td><td>1959</td><td>12,373 hectares</td><td>67%</td></tr><tr><td>2. Northern Division</td><td>262</td><td>1033 hectares</td><td>9%</td></tr><tr><td>3. Central/Eastern Division</td><td>730</td><td>3778 hectares</td><td>24.7%</td></tr><tr><td>TOTAL</td><td>2951 LOTS</td><td>17,184 hectares</td><td></td></tr></table>					Lots	Area	Percentage (Vacant State Land)	1. Western Division	1959	12,373 hectares	67%	2. Northern Division	262	1033 hectares	9%	3. Central/Eastern Division	730	3778 hectares	24.7%	TOTAL	2951 LOTS	17,184 hectares	
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	<p>Supplementary question –</p> <p>a) How does the Ministry determine the land availability in different districts,</p>	<p>a) The Ministry has developed the Land Use Master Plan which control and regulates the land utilisation and development on State Land. The Land Use Master Plan Project Team for the Ministry have completed the Land Use Master Plan for the entire Western Region and it has been approved by the Department of Town & Country Planning. Now, the Team has completed the field work</p>																							

	<p>and how are these areas prioritized for development or conservation?</p> <p>(i) Could the Ministry elaborate on the measures taken to ensure sustainable land use, particularly in areas identified for urban expansion?</p>	<p>for the Master Plan of the Northern Region and are working on compiling the field report and drawing of Map. The groundwork for the Central Eastern region has commenced also. The Land Use Master Plan will ensure the fair distribution of land in terms of its zonings or usage (development types) and also includes areas for conservation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Master Plan upholds the sustainable utilisation of State land and collaborates with Municipalities to determine
	<p>b) As of 31st July 2023, the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources exceeded its targets, particularly in the number of approved surveys plans that attributed to several factors.</p> <p>Can the Ministry provide a detailed breakdown of the specific strategies or initiatives that led to surpassing its targets during the 2022–2023 period?</p>	<p>There has been a significant improvement in the approval of survey plans during the 2022–2023 fiscal year. This progress can be attributed to several key initiatives undertaken by the Ministry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A thorough review of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) was conducted with the aim of streamlining the survey plan approval process. This involved identifying and eliminating duplication and overlaps in work processes and responsibilities, which has resulted in greater efficiency and faster turnaround times. • The Ministry has strengthened collaboration with key stakeholders involved in the survey plan approval process. This enhanced coordination has contributed to smoother workflows and better alignment across agencies. • In addition, efforts have been made to improve monitoring mechanisms to ensure accountability, track progress more effectively, and promptly address any bottlenecks that arise during the approval process. <p>These combined efforts have yielded tangible results in improving service delivery and reducing delays in survey plan approvals.</p>
	<p>c) The table on page 10 of the report outlines the Survey Plans approved by Tenure and Zone, with certain portions highlighted or shaded.</p>	<p>Further clarifications to this questions is required. Waiting for the secretariat's response.</p>

	Can the Ministry provide further clarification on the significance of the shaded portions in the table?	
12	<p>State Land Management</p> <p>In the report, it is mentioned that the Ministry manages approximately 4% of Fiji's land area.</p> <p>a) Can the Ministry provide a more detailed explanation of the allocation and management of state lands in 2022–2023?</p> <p>b) What steps is the Ministry taking to address the challenges of land reversion and its impact on the development of state land?</p>	<p>a) The allocation of State Land is aligned to our Standard Operating procedure which requires all State Land available for leasing to be advertised in the local dailies and in the Ministry website. Allocation to successful applicant is based on merit during the interview assessment. We do also consider application received on special circumstances whereby allocation is determined under the discrete decision of the Minister under Section 10 of the State Lands Act.</p> <p>b) At present, we have received high volumes of land claims from iTaukei landowners with different contexts or basis of claims. We deal with all these land claims on a case-by-case basis. Data gathering by way of research to determine the facts and evidence of claim is also a challenge, as we need to visit various stakeholders to gather all these data. Missing of key information in some of these stakeholders is also a major challenge. There is no extreme impact of land reversion on the development of State Land. Existing leases on State Land bound for reversion will be transmitted to iTLTB once the reversion process is completed.</p>
13	<p>Land Ownership and Disputes</p> <p>a) What steps has the Ministry taken to resolve land ownership disputes, especially those related to native land, and how effective have these measures been in the 2022–2023 period?</p> <p>b) b) Has there been an increase in the number of land disputes or claims in 2022–2023, and what specific</p>	<p>a) Land Ownership disputes on iTaukei Land are normally referred to the iTaukei Lands Commission to solve. They have their own Survey Unit which assist in resolving land ownership disputes and other related matters.</p> <p>b) We have not received many complaints about land ownership disputes in 2022 – 2023. Hence, it signify that the iTaukei Survey Team are doing quite well in resolving all land disputes.</p>

	actions are being undertaken to address them?	
14.	<p>Mineral Resources and Exploration</p> <p>a) Can the Ministry provide an update on the status of mineral exploration and extraction activities under the Ministry's supervision?</p> <p>b) How does the Ministry ensure that these activities comply with environmental sustainability guidelines?</p> <p>c) How does the Ministry monitor and regulate mining leases, and what actions?</p>	<p>a. The Ministry, through the Mineral Resources Department (MRD), currently oversees several active mineral exploration licenses and mining leases across Fiji including those licenses under renewal processes. Exploration activities are ongoing in regions of Vanua Levu, Viti Levu, and various offshore areas, targeting commodities including gold, copper, silver, and industrial minerals. As of the latest reporting period: (tenement information is attached for reference)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 36 valid exploration licenses are active. 2. A number of these have progressed to advanced exploration, including resource definition drilling and feasibility assessments. (Kalo Exploration, Magma Mines, Namosi Joint Venture). 3. Three mining operations are active (Vatukoula Gold Mines & Lion One and Amex Resources), with a few other projects in the development or application phase for mining leases. (Wainunu Bauxite and Kukukulu Ironsand) 4. The Ministry continues to review and assess quarterly and annual technical reports submitted by license holders, ensuring compliance with exploration work programs and license conditions. <p>b. The Ministry ensures environmental sustainability through the following measures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Process: All mining projects are required to undergo a comprehensive EIA under the Environment Act 2005, in collaboration with the Department of Environment. 2. Environmental Management Plans (EMP): Companies must submit and adhere to EMPs outlining mitigation strategies for environmental risks. 3. Monitoring and Audits: Regular site inspections and environmental audits are conducted by MRD in coordination with other relevant agencies to ensure environmental compliance. 4. Rehabilitation and Closure Plans: Proponents are required to prepare mine closure and rehabilitation plans, including financial provisions for site restoration.

		<p>c. The Ministry, through its Mines Division, monitors and regulates mining leases via:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quarterly and Annual Reporting: Leaseholders are mandated to submit detailed reports on production, employment, environmental compliance, and safety performance. 2. Site Inspections: Routine and ad-hoc inspections are conducted by Mine Inspectors to assess occupational health and safety, environmental management, and adherence to lease conditions. 3. Non-Compliance Actions: If a company is found in breach of lease conditions, the Ministry issues warning notices, improvement orders, or cessation notices. Serious breaches may result in suspension or cancellation of leases under the Mining Act. 4. Inter-agency Collaboration: The Ministry works closely with the Department of Environment, Water Authority, and iTaukei Land Trust Board to address community, land use, and environmental concerns. <p>Landowner Issues: The Ministry has noticed an increase on issues and concerns by landowners to mineral explorations which is acknowledged and understandable. These concerns and issues are normally resolved through dialogue and awareness which can take time that do affect deliverables of investor into those exploration projects.</p>
15.	<p>Technology and Modernization</p> <p>a) In the report, there is mention of technology and digitization in land surveying processes. Could the Ministry provide more details on the digital systems or platforms introduced in 2022–2023 to improve land management and survey processes?</p>	<p>Between 2022 and 2023, Fiji's Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources implemented several digital initiatives to enhance land surveying and management processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vanua GIS and Vanua View Platform: Launched on August 1, 2022, these platforms allow the public to track new surveys for iTaukei land online. Users can access survey plans and scanned documents, promoting transparency and facilitating investment and sustainable development. • State Land Online Application (OSLA) Portal: Introduced in March 2023, this portal enables potential lessees to apply for state land leases remotely. It provides detailed information on available lots, including location, access roads, and proximity to water bodies, aiding informed decision-making.

	<p>b) How has the use of technology contributed to more efficient land administration and surveying, and</p> <p>c) What future technological advancements are planned for the coming years?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MyLeaseInfo Portal: Set for revamp in 2023, this portal allows state lessees to apply for consents and track application statuses online, reducing processing times and enhancing efficiency. • Digitization of Records: The Ministry has set up a team to scan all LD Files. This is to ensure all records have a softcopy which officers can refer to. • Survey Software and Equipment Upgrades: Investments were made in software like AutoCAD and 12D Model, along with large-format scanners, to digitize historical land records and enhance survey plan processing • Advanced Surveying Equipment: The Ministry procured Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) units to improve accuracy and efficiency in mapping, surveying, • The Ministry has commenced preliminary work on the development of an online system for e-Plan lodgement, which will enable surveyors to submit their survey plans electronically. This system aims to eliminate the need for in-person visits to the office, thereby streamlining the plan lodgement process and improving the efficiency of survey plan checking and approval.
16.	<p>Land Allocation and Investment</p> <p>a) How is the Ministry promoting land availability for private sector investment, particularly in tourism, agriculture, and real estate sectors?</p> <p>b) Are there any initiatives or policies aimed at improving land access for local businesses and communities in rural or underdeveloped areas?</p>	<p>a) Lands available for leasing are advertised in the local dailies and our Ministry website in its respective categories (tourism, agriculture, residential, commercial, industrial, etc). Interested individuals or companies including local and foreign investors are encouraged to lodge in their application by filling in the application form that is available online. They are also required to lodge in their application online in the platform provided.</p> <p>b) We understand that almost 90 percent of our citizens are accessing mobile internet in both the urban and rural areas. We have developed a MyLease Info Database which allows all members of the public, both in urban or rural areas to access State Land information in their mobile phones. All they need to do is to register online to access their State Land lease information online. The MyLease Info Database can be accessed in the Ministry website: www.lands.gov.fj</p>
17.	Future Targets and Challenges	Capacity Building and Workforce Development

	<p>a) Given the achievements in 2022–2023, what are the Ministry’s key targets and priorities for the upcoming year in terms of land surveying, management, and mineral resource development?</p> <p>b) What are the main challenges the Ministry expects to face in the next reporting period, and what strategies are being considered to address these challenges?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing Surveyor and Valuers Shortage: Recognizing the critical shortage of registered land surveyors and valuers, the Ministry is focusing on increasing the number of qualified professionals through collaborations with tertiary institutions and reviewing relevant legislation to modernize the profession
18.	<p>Environmental and Social Impact</p> <p>a) How does the Ministry ensure that land developments and mineral exploration activities do not negatively impact local communities and the environment?</p> <p>b) Can the Ministry provide data or case studies from the 2022–2023 period on the environmental impact assessments (EIAs) conducted for major land development projects?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mining Division mandates early and ongoing consultation with affected landowners, local communities, and other stakeholders. This process ensures that their concerns are heard and incorporated into project planning and management, fostering transparency and social acceptance. During these consultations, the Environment Unit presents geochemical data such as water quality analysis to community members to keep them informed about the environmental conditions and potential impacts. • Collaboration with other government bodies such as the Department of Environment (DoE), Ministry of Forestry (MoF), and Ministry of iTaukei Affairs (TLTB) to address cross-sectoral concerns and ensure integrated management of natural resources • Compliance monitoring through regular inspections and reporting requirements.
19.	<p>Page 52 – Independent Auditors Report – Emphasis of Matter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducts thorough investigations in response to any environmental complaints received from the communities or stakeholders. These investigations help identify the source and extent of the issue and ensure that appropriate corrective actions are taken promptly to protect the environment and affected communities. • The Ministry has implemented a Trust guideline and adhered to in terms of the facilitation of trust

	Can the Ministry please update the Committee on the Trust Fund Account from which landowning units received funds?	<p>payment. Proper verification is carried out to ensure that all relevant process is adhered to as stated in the SOP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The release of funds to the Mataqali trust accounts is mostly done half yearly, which is as and when the rentals are received. <p>The Ministry has been directly liaising with Land Owning Unit trustees in ensuring good governance and transparency. We have been conducting extensive on the ground training on to one basis with LOU's.</p>
20.	Can the Ministry please explain on the criteria for issuing of sand and gravel license?	<p>The criteria that need to be fulfilled by individuals or companies intending to apply for issuance of Sand and Gravel License are as follows: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formal Application Letter 2. Locality plan of proposed extraction site 3. Application Fees - \$30 (VEP) 4. Fishing Rights owner's consent: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. not less than 60% of owners who are 18years and above; b. stamped and endorsed by Roko Tui 5. Access agreement between the landowner and licensee 6. Approval from Department of Environment (EIA/EMP) 7. Resource Assessment Report (Quality and Quantity of the Resource) 8. Certified True Copy of Tin Letter and Photo ID of Licensee <p>FOR COMPANIES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Company Registration Certificate 2. Schedule of Directors and Shareholders

Appendix 2

Verbatim Report

[VERBATIM REPORT]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON **NATURAL RESOURCES**

ANNUAL REPORT

MINISTRY OF LANDS AND MINERAL RESOURCES
1ST AUG 2021 to 31ST JULY 2022

SUBMITTEE: **Ministry of Lands and Mineral
Resources**

VENUE: **Big Committee Room, Parliament**

DATE: **Wednesday, 17th February, 2025**

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, 17TH FEBRUARY, 2025 AT 10.46 A.M.

Interviewee/Submittee: **Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources**

In Attendance:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| 1) Mr. Paula Cirikiyasawa | - | Permanent Secretary |
| 2) Mr. Josefa Vuniamatana | - | Director of Lands |
| 3) Mr. Apete Soro | - | Director Mineral Resources |
| 4) Ms. Selina Talemaisainiai | - | Director Corporate Services |
| 5) Mr. Apisai Vulawalu | - | Assistant Director of Lands |
| 6) Mr. William Robert | - | Acting Divisional Land Manager Central Eastern |
| 7) Mr. Marika Qalo | - | Manager Finance |
| 8) Mr. Ilaitia Dokonivalu | - | Manager Geological Services Division |
| 9) Mr. Marika Tunidau | - | Manager Land Use Division |
| 10) Ms. Luisa Cavuilati | - | Principal Administration Officer |
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DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- 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 fourth submission meeting of 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 purposes, 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 very 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 other 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)

With us this morning, we have the representatives from the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources who have been requested to provide a submission on the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources 1st August 2021 to 31st July 2022 Annual Report. Now, I take this time to invite our submission guests to introduce themselves before we proceed with the submission. .

(Introduction of representatives from Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources)

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Please note that if there are any questions by the Members of the Committee, they may interject, or we will wait until the end of the presentation to ask our questions. And with this, please, you may start with your presentation.

MR. P. CIRIKIYAWASA.- Deputy Chairman, honourable Members of the Committee, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the invitation to be here this morning. As you aware that we have provided our written responses to the questions that were posed to the Ministry. The team will have an opportunity to delve in detail on the respective questions. I understand as you are aware that you have 17 questions that we need to respond to. And we have been reliable informed that there are other supplementary questions that the team will stand ready to respond when appropriate.

Deputy Chairman and honourable Members of Parliament, on Question 1 regarding the letter to the Minister, as it was posed to us. If you note from the Annual Report, the financial year is from 2021-2022 and this was when honourable Jone Usamate was the then Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources. Hope we provide clarity on that.

MR. J. VUNIAMATANA.- Deputy Chairman, through you, just in summary on **Question 2** that is directed towards the effectiveness of the monitoring system that we have over State land leases that we issue.

Just to take us through the response, you will understand that all State land leases issued are issued under the guidance of the State Lands Act. All leases that are issued are protected and guided by the State Lands Act and there are lease conditions that direct all lessees to lease all this land in accordance with what the conditions direct them to do so.

So, yes, the land utilisation of all these leases is in accordance to the zoning that we have over this land and how the lease is issued. I understand from the question is there any utilisation clause? Yes, indeed. If the lease is issued for agricultural purposes, it will need to be utilised for agricultural purposes only. If it is issued for residential then for residential purposes only. So, it is in accordance to the issuance of the leases and also in accordance to the approach zoning for those pieces of land.

(b) Does the Ministry have any examples of land being taken back from the lessees?

Yes, we have leases that have been re-entered by the Ministry. The requirements of the law direct us to issue or breach notices when we see that the lessees of a State land are now utilising land that is debating away from what the lease conditions direct them to do. So that being the case, we are directed by law to issue them breach notices, give them sufficient time to remedy these breaches. More to that, if these breaches are not remedied in time, this is where the Ministry comes in, and then we cancel these leases by re-entering whereby it takes them back and readvertises them for members of the public who wish to utilise them to the highest and best use in accordance with the conditions of the lease.

MR. A. VULAWALU.- **Question 3**, can the Ministry explain what percentage of the State land is still to be developed to be leased out to proper utilisation?

Based on the data that has been extracted in our system, approximately about 23.16 percent of State land is yet to be developed, and based on that, the Ministry currently has the Land Use Master Plan Project that aims to guide the land use for State land in Fiji. Once complete the Ministry will be in a better position to enhance its development plan, including its approvals, as it will also be able to establish how much of the State lands are available for leasing and those that are not utilised.

MR. J. VUNIAMATANA.- **Question 4**, Deputy Chairman, through you once again, how does the Ministry set up its targets figures as shown in the Table.

I guess this primarily was us towards the land administration targets division that we have for the Ministry. We have a benchmark of about 20 percent plus or minus. References are usually made to the achievements made in the last five years or so to guide us on what numbers we set up for the new financial years that we have. So, the achievement of those numbers in the last five years usually sets the base for us setting up our targets for the new financial year.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Deputy Chairman, through you, I would request our Director of Corporate Services just to touch on a bit on the corporate planning exercise. I would like to highlight that this financial year is coming on the back of COVID-19 in terms of planning and this is the base year that the Ministry has tried to make it come back from COVID-19.

MS. S. TALEMAISAINIAI.- Deputy Chairman, through you, just to elaborate a little bit about our corporate planning targets. For the Ministry, as alluded to by our Director of Lands, we tend to benchmark on previous year's achievements and then we allocate our targets for the following year. So, that has been the case of precedents for the last four years. However, we are currently doing further planning processes in terms of SWOT analysis to try and bring up our benchmarking targets, so that we may fully utilise our resources to increase our targets for the next five years as far as our Strategic Development Plan.

MR. W. ROBERT.- Deputy Chairman, Sir, in regards to **Question 5**, can the Ministry please elaborate more on the completed target outputs?

Sir, in terms of Survey Plan Approval, this is a final product of initial activity. Thereafter, a lease/title can be submitted for registration with the Registrar of Titles. Our target was 240 and we have managed to achieve 838 approved survey plans. These are the survey plans lodged by private and Government surveys.

Upgrade of Geodetic Datum, a letter of request was sent to Geoscience Australia through SPC seeking technical assistance in processing of Meta data using high tech software to define the new datum for Fiji.

Maintenance work was continued to be carried out for the eight Continuous Operating Reference Systems (CORS) i.e. Labasa, Nabouwalu, Taveuni, Koro, Kadavu, Lakeba, Ono-i-Lau and Rotuma fixing internet connectivity and power failure.

In terms of Survey of Mahogany Leases, there are 28 leases in Nukurua, and out of the 28, 16 leases in Sawakasa Mahogany Plantations. Each year, the target to demarcate and survey individual lease boundary is set out according to our allocated budget. The demarcation and survey are time-consuming due to terrain geographical locations of the lease lot. The survey was drawn, reports were prepared and lodged to the Plan Assessment Unit for assessment and approval. Once the survey plan is thoroughly assessed, it will then be

processed for approval by the Surveyor General. The assessment and approval of the survey plan takes some time because other stakeholders' involvement is involved such as Department of Town and Country Planning, also requires mandatory approval.

Maintenance of Existing Subdivision, the Ministry has existing subdivision that was developed decades ago. The maintenance work is mainly to upgrade the deteriorating access, footpath, drainage system and retaining work.

Survey Equipment Calibration, all survey equipment used by surveyors in Fiji are tested on standard baseline which is the survey marks to test its reliability accuracy in terms of its distance, measurement and bearings.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Sir, just to add to that, particularly on the survey of mahogany leases, I think, honourable Kalaveti Ravu will be aware that one of the reasons why the Government had moved to survey mahogany leases, the fact that back in the days of Fiji Hardwood Corporation Limited, they could not take the standing trees to be used as collateral, hence the need for survey.

It has taken time, but this has to be done well, hence note that there is a bit of reference regarding this initiative, and it will probably take another two years to complete the entire survey of mahogany leases in the country.

MS. S. TALEMAISAINIAI.- Deputy Chairman, through you, **Question 6**, can the Ministry please explain the challenges and way forward for staff capacity as shown in the table provided.

I believe this is in reference to our Valuation Division which had faced staff leaving the Ministry after getting registered. The Ministry have two professions that rely on registration so that they may move up the career ladder and these are two very scarce field positions - surveyors and valuers. They need to complete projects before they get registered, and this tends to take up quite a bit of their career time at work. The Ministry continues to face this ongoing challenge. We start getting registered and moving on to better opportunities in the private sector or abroad.

But to answer the question in relation to these two professions, we have recently been encouraging, giving acting appointments, promoting short-term trainings and even trainings abroad to try and retain them in the Ministry with these incentives. We had also implemented the Government's retention policy that was brought last year through regularisation and salary increases.

The Ministry was part of those exercises as well and we managed to regularise some of our staff through those exercises that were taken up through the whole of Government last year. We are also pursuing our local practice. This has not been approved for a while as the Ministry tried to increase or better our internal achievement of targeted plans. But now that we have seen that we can balance the two, we are pursuing our local policies so that is something that we have also been implementing in the next couple of weeks.

Also, as part of our retention strategies, we have also as part of our planning targets incorporated the capacity building for surveyors and valuers into our planning documents. So, this is now part of our Strategic Development Plan and this is aligned to the National Development Plan as well. That is something that our relevant HODs of these two Departments will be responsible for capacity building and help register their staff in terms of valuers and surveyors.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Deputy Chairman, just to add on, we all aware that staff turnover is always a challenge within government. We are constrained by the limits of the salary band that we work with, but we are trying our best to be very innovative and, of course, retain the best people that we have trained over the years. That is something that we are working very hard with the corporate service team and of course to retain the best

MR. A. VULAWALU.- Deputy Chairman, through you, **Question 7**, the Ministry's Annual Report indicates that a target was set to increase the number of land leases issued in the 2021-2022 period.

(a) Can the Ministry provide the specific number of land leases granted during this period?

The land leases granted for this period is 761. The breakdown for that, Sir, for the Central Eastern Division they produced 175; Northern Division produced 62 and the Western Division produced 524.

(b) How does this compare to the target set at the beginning of the year?

The target for stamping and registration of leases, licenses, and other related legal documents, 100 percent registration at Titles Office. The Ministry managed to register 100 percent of these documents - leases and licenses at the Titles Office.

The Ministry's target was 500, the achievement was 1,254 which is 251percent.

(c) What factors contributed to achieving or missing this target?

Some contributing factors towards exceeding these targets are teamwork, ongoing in-house training and assigning the Lands Officer at the Titles Office to assist license deregistration of our documents.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Deputy Chairman, as reiterated earlier, we are moving from the back of COVID-19. We will note that in terms of achievement, it is a bit on the high end. We come in from a low base and moderate as we move into the medium term.

MR. A. SORO.- Deputy Chairman, through you, with regards to the responses from the Department of Mineral Resources for **Question 8**. First, our sincere apologies, there seems to be some typo with regards to the response that was given earlier. I would like to also clarify on the question which is asking for mining licenses that were issued this term from August 2021 to July 2022.

There are no mining licenses issued by the department, only mining lease. I think this needs to be well clarified because they are very important in terms of the administrative of mining.

Lease is for mining and license is for mineral exploration. The differences between these two are very important. Under lease, landowners' rights and ownership are forfeited, whereas under license, landowners' rights and ownerships remains with the landowners. Under license, which mainly involves mineral explorations, landowners' rights and ownership remains while the investor or the mineral exploration companies are given priority to enter the land for the purpose of mineral exploration. I think that needs to be clarified.

With regards to (a), as you may have seen, the typo there was a total of five leases which is called Special Mining Leases. Three of its leases are owned by Vatukoula, one is for Bauxite ZINFA and one for Magnetite Iron Sand with Amex Resources Limited.

As for (b) with regards to estimated contribution of these leases to government revenue, again, there seems to be misinformation from our staff with regards to this response. The \$116,23,108.50 is the total export of minerals from the operating companies during this term. If I may be allowed, within this term, only Vatukoula and Amex were operating. XINFA which was for Bauxite was under care and maintenance. So, the actual total number of contributions from the figure that you see there on the slide will be somewhere around 22 percent to 23 percent, that is, inclusive of royalty, fees and taxes.

For (d), I think the question there responds well because Nawailevu is one of our success stories in terms of rehabilitation. The land was disturbed during mining, ore body or bauxite was extracted, but now it has been fully rehabilitated with standing pines.

As for (d), I think this is also a very relevant and pertinent question. The Ministry does not have any records of such a venture where the landowners are partners with investors. In terms of other benefits that are derived from the licences, those are lists.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Deputy Chairman, just in addition to Directors brief. As you aware that the Ministry for Lands and Mineral Resources had briefed Parliament on the Review of the Mining Act. This is probably coming in the first sitting, to provide a brief on the workplan that we will be embarking on. I think work has been simultaneously done by the department working with some consultants and some experts to be able to provide that update during the first sitting of Parliament.

MR. A. SOKO.- With regards to **Question 9** on Environmental Compliance in Mining Operations. There were no environmental audit as mentioned in this period. However, within the department, we do have an Environment Unit that basically conducts our usual screening and also inspections of all our licenses and leases. This also includes quarry operations. They do this on a quarterly basis where they visit all operating mines and operating quarries and assess and monitor their operations according to the conditions set out for environment concerns and compliance. Unfortunately, throughout these inspections, as you may be aware, a number of operators have issues with compliance with regards to environment protection, especially in terms of safety and best practices although they were given ample time to rectify these issues.

So overall, these mining operations do not have any major environmental breaches. When I say that because the benchmarks with regards to water discharge has to have a certain, say for example, cyanide or arsenic concentrations. With regard to sampling of this water, you are taking out a micro litre of thousands of litres and you equate it according to the set standards that are set out for the waste permit status for each of these operations.

MR. M. TUNIDAU.- Deputy Chairman, through you, **Question 10** is directed to the efforts by the Ministry to streamline land use policy to enhance economic development.

- (a) Can the Ministry elaborate on how these policy changes have impacted land use in the tourism sector, particularly in coastal areas?

At the moment, there is no land use policy on coastal areas for tourism purposes. However, under the State Land Act, the Ministry has the regulatory authority of all foreshore developments. Moving forward, the Ministry is currently formulating a foreshore policy. This policy describes how foreshore leases and licenses are processed and allocated.

- (b) Were there any new regulations or initiatives introduced during the period to protect these areas?

There were no new legislations or initiatives in the mentioned financial year. However, the Ministry anticipates to develop the following policies:-

- (i) Risk management policy; and
- (ii) Grievance and mediation policy.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Deputy Chairman, Sir, just in addition to the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, they are working on this tourism legislative framework, they are taking that to Cabinet and hopefully this will address, in terms of development of the foreshore and amalgamating coexistence and what needs to be done in this endeavour.

MR. J. VUNIAMATANA.- Deputy Chairman, with regards to **Question 11**, technological advancement and digitisation records of the Ministry. As of to-date with the digitisation of all the records in the Ministry we have managed to cover 12,000 leases that have already been scanned with the Ministry. You will understand that most of the land leases that is being handled by the Ministry, most of the times has been done manually. We hold files of them. This is something that the Ministry is trying to get away from and try to digitise all the records so that we have all these captured in the system. Probably more to that, in addition to the responses before you, the Ministry continues to relook at its SOPs, relook at its processing line with regards to land leases and try and improve on the timelines that we have over them.

As we speak, Deputy Chairman, we have a team that is headed by the Deputy-Secretary that is on a fact-finding mission in New Zealand. The team is there as we speak to reach out to our counterparts in New Zealand, Land Information New Zealand with regards to information that they have over land lease information, the registry system, the programming and all other facts they can gather that can be implemented back on their return. Yes, we continue to look into this to try and improve and fasten the turnaround time with regards to our land lease operations.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- In addition to what Director Lands had mentioned that as you are aware that files are transmitted and moved around from divisions physically. So, every week CDP is always moving the files around. Even though the files are signed off from our Divisional Office, they still have to come for Director Lands' consent.

Just an update on the New Zealand trip, we are embarking on this digital transformation journey. Note that our team within, we want to move towards paperless. We are working with Vodafone on this DocuSign. For those of you who are familiar with DocuSign, this is some sort of a minute that we transmit around. We want to do that online. So, we will roll that out in a couple of weeks. This is something, in addition to what the Director had mentioned on the scanning. The plan is, there will come a time when we will stop moving the files around. We will do this online, and hopefully it is going to shorten and streamline all the processes. You know that in terms of investor uptake, a lot of our investors get frustrated by the lag time in the approvals process in the various Departments and Ministries. So, hopefully, from our side, it will become a game changer for us moving forward.

MR. I. DOKONIVALU.- Deputy Chairman, Sir, **Question 12**, Groundwater Monitoring.

(a) Why were the targets not achieved?

The Hydrogeology Section is a small unit within the division. It comprises of 13 staff and two vehicles. Their responsibility cover the survey, the development, the monitoring of groundwater and also the supervision of drilling projects. We currently have four drilling rigs in our fleet. The response that is provided from one to four are the major activities that the unit is involved in and the required staff and vehicles to

enable the unit to achieve its targets. So, basically, the section does not have enough personnel to attend to these activities.

Deputy Chairman, Sir, as alluded to by PS, this was during the post-pandemic period and field deployments was severely affected during that time.

(b) How effective is the groundwater programme?

Groundwater Programme in recent years has not been very effective based on the information that has been provided. This has resulted in large gaps in monitoring data. The division has acknowledged this and to address this in 2023-2024, the Unit procured 15 data loggers. This is an equipment that can be installed in boreholes and measure the water level at predetermined intervals, say, 30 minutes, one hour, up to 12 hours or one measurement per day. The data can be downloaded in one month, three months or six months and this should address the issue that we have with groundwater monitoring.

(c) What is the minimum level of groundwater retention required to ensure sustainable harvesting whilst ensuring minimal environmental impact?

Sir, all aquifers have a capacity to store groundwater and this is called storage. This fluctuates in response to seasonal changes and impacts. The recharge into these aquifers normally equals to whatever is discharged out into the environment and to the atmosphere, and also the change in storage. This discharge supports rivers, streams and wetlands. Any abstraction is a disruption of this. It is prudent that a small percentage of this recharge is calculated to be the allowable, sustainable, total extraction volume for an aquifer in a year. This means that the total aquifer storage should not be affected. The abstraction is determined from the total annual recharge for an aquifer.

For a monitoring borehole which shows a declining trend in water levels over the years, this means the groundwater abstraction is tapping into the storage of an aquifer. If there is no pumping but water levels still declines, this would be the impact of climate change. So, this is the whole purpose of improving this groundwater monitoring programme.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- In addition, Deputy Chairman, Sir, as you are aware from the update, very technical in nature, but in a nutshell, the process that they go through is in three phases. First up is a geophysics technical study. If there are prospects and then the drilling, so during the drilling if the water discharge requires for them to collect water from the borehole then that is when the reticulation kicks in. Having said that, part of the work that they do, it covers non-reticulated areas. Areas that are covered by the Water Authority of Fiji and even the rural water supply, there are gap areas. I think for those of you that are aware in the Western Division, one particular area is from Cuvu to Momi. That is one of the focus areas of the team. They have been there for quite some time looking around for some possible borehole to dig up and ensure that water is supplied to nearby communities.

In Bua, we had worked with DFAT. For Lekutu and Dama, and of course, there are further collaborations from Geoscience Australia on the actual magnetic process. I think the intent now is, there is a flyover, there is a magnetic ring or something and they can pick up those minerals and of course that will alleviate and streamline a lot of the processes that the team go through. Hopefully probably towards the latter part of the year when this happens, it should allow them to identify more communities to be reticulated.

MR. M. QALO.- Deputy Chairman, through you, in addition to the response provided, during this financial year 2021-2022, the Ministry was allocated with a budget envelope of \$25.3 million. And by the

end of that financial year, we managed to commit around \$22.6 million, with a savings of \$2.7 million which is equivalent to 89.3 percent.

During this financial year, in terms of financial governance, we were rated as generally effective and with that, that resulted in our Audit Report to be unmodified after verified and audited by the Office of the Auditor-General. So, from the \$2.7 million savings in the financial year, majority of the savings comes from SEG 1, which is our established staff around \$1.8 million. The main reason was due to some of our offices being paid 70 percent to 80 percent salary as they did not meet the full qualification requirements of the post. And also for our GWEs, a savings of \$175,000. This was mainly due to the restructure in the Ministry in terms of the payment made to all our Government Wage Earners.

During this financial year the Ministry was able to collect a total revenue of \$20.6 million in comparison to the budget of \$25.3 million.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- In addition to that, Deputy Chairman, the revenue is inclusive of what is collected from the Mineral Resources Department from the mines and of course from the land rental.

MR. A. VULAWALU.- Deputy Chairman, **Question 14** on Public Engagement and Stakeholder Involvement. The report notes increased engagement with local communities and stakeholders regarding land use and mineral resource management.

- a) Can the Ministry provide details on the number of consultations held with landowners and other community groups during the year?

As we know, most of the development work done are done on all foreshore areas. This includes our rivers too for extraction of river gravels. It is really important for us to engage our resource owners or traditional *i qoliqoli* owners just to inform them the importance of the development work that needs to be undertaken. And through that, it is important to consult them on their rights and to obtain their consent prior to issuance of licenses for extraction of gravel and also for issuance of leases and licenses on foreshore for development purposes.

Listed below are the number of consultations held with the landowners and the communities. There were 15 consultations done in 2024.

- b) What were the outcomes of these consultations?

The outcomes of the consultations were as follows:

- (i) 66.67 percent of awareness of offshore processes and applications;
- (ii) 13.33 percent of the consented waiver of fishing rights form; and
- (iii) 20 percent of the non-consented waiver of fishing rights form due to certain reasons such as the compensation payment before signing of the waiver form.

Some traditional *i qoliqoli* owners demanded the payment of compensation prior to signing of the waiver form. Another reason is the partnership with the developers. Some of the traditional *i qoliqoli* owners requested to form partnership with the developers.

And the last one is the lack of members' consent to the development proposal.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Just in addition to what our Assistant Director had mentioned, some particular case, what we have done is, in terms of collection of royalty and the waiver. There is a particular case in Port Denarau. We had we worked with the company that is dredging the spoils from the river for the Ministry to waive the govern aspect of the royalty and, of course, just to pay landowners in terms of collaboration on a case-by-case basis what works. This is something that the Ministry is working towards.

MR. A. SORO.- Deputy Chairman, through you and honourable Members of the Committee, with regards to climate change and land management, according to the slides presented before you, both Departments (Lands and Mineral Resources), it is mandatory component for Environment Impact Assessments (EIA) for mining leases and also foreshore leases. Those are mandatory requirements.

For licenses, it depends on planned activities either an EIA, Environment Assessment Mandatory or an Environment Management Plan.

In consideration of climate change, a classic example is the Amex Mining Lease extracting iron-sand at the mouth of the Ba River. The way it was approved, the mining lease or the mining plans for the extraction of iron-sand from the mouth of the Ba River was designed in such a way that it could alleviate or assist in addressing the flood of the Ba Town. That was how the mining of iron-sand in the mouth of the Ba River was considered.

In addition to that, the Department or the Ministry is also heavily involved with the relocation programmes. We have a unit within the department that basically is responsible for looking through relocation communities with regards to geotechnical works. If a community needs to be relocated and where they are going to be relocated to, it needs these necessary pre-assessments of geotechnical work.

On the initiatives, the Department of Mineral Resources has a mandate that it indirectly implements projects to promote climate resilience in land use planning but contributes in coastal landslides, geotechnical assessments and surveys to provide geoscientific data and information to support the initiatives and implementation projects.

With regards to our Lands Department, it is not directly involved with the climate change initiative projects, but it somehow promotes community engagement in mangrove planting.

MR. J. VUNIAMATAMA.- Deputy Chairman, probably in addition to the response given by the Director of Mineral Development, with regards to climate change for the Lands Department, you probably may have heard earlier that we now have a Land Use Master Plan Project in place, something that started some two years back.

We have this land use team that are now drawing up all the land use usage for all State land in Fiji that will now start to include issues like climate change. So, this is the Master Plan that will now be a guiding document for the department with regards to giving out approvals on development of State land.

You will note that some of the leases issued back then over State land, the ones that are now being infiltrated with salt water, they are now being affected by climate change. Those are the ones that need to be catered in the Land Use Master Plan on how best we can issue those leases that can cater for this.

Secondly, we also have a review of the State Lands Act that is currently in place. You will understand that these laws were enacted some years ago when things like climate change were foreign terms to us. We are now in the review of the State Lands Act, also with regards to our policies, such as the foreshore policy,

these are the things that we will now take into consideration when we are doing the review work for this legislation.

Thirdly, we have been receiving some applications from some organisations with regards to mangrove replanting. This is something that is granted by the Ministry and we feel this is our contribution to the fight against climate change. With granting consents for the planting of mangrove, applications have been received from some organisations with regards to this.

Lastly, we also issued desilting licences. This is something that we feel can help with regards to flood mitigation works. Desilting licenses are also issued by the Ministry. So, it is something that we work together with the Ministry of Waterways, and we also feel it is a contribution from the Ministry towards mitigation towards climate change.

MS. S. TALEMAISANIAI.- Does the Ministry have a proper plan that is inclusive of its Human Resources Development Plan, linking it to the Ministry's medium and long term objectives?

The Ministry does not have a Human Resources Development Plan, however, the Ministry has a Strategic Workforce Plan and a Training Plan that addresses training gaps in needs of the different professions within the Ministry.

Based on this, staff are identified to undertake local and overseas capacity building opportunities. Just to add to the Strategic Workforce Plan, is also an accompanying document when we submit our Corporate Plan to the Ministry of Finance in every annual budgeting year. So, while we do not have it as part of our Corporate Plan, it is an accompanying document that is supplied together with our budget submissions annually.

If I may, can I just continue? We also partake yearly on our training needs analysis and because we are limited by budget, we tend to be susceptible to the training that is advertised through the Ministry of Civil Service and through donor invites. So that is where we always try to encourage our staff to apply for any training opportunities that come through government invites and through donor invites as well.

I believe our Director Lands had mentioned earlier, we currently have a team that is on a work scoping study in New Zealand. This is also part of some of the initiatives that we are amending internally when opportunity arises to send staff on work attachments where possible, to scope industry, to get additional land capacity building opportunities so they may come back and implement in the Ministry.

We have also just recently amended our training process in terms of those who go on study leave. We had previously cut down on our numbers and due to COVID, and due to budget limitations previously. However, we are pursuing vigorously to allow our staff to take on opportunities through study leave with full pay. We currently have seven staff abroad who are pursuing their studies in the fields that we have chosen ranging from mining to land development.

And, just to add on, Deputy Chairman, if I may, in the Ministry, as I mentioned, training opportunities for our surveyors and our valuers is done through their work project pursuing. So, that is something that I have also mentioned that we are aligning to the NDP. We have incorporated that into our targeted plans for the next couple of years to pursue project work attachments for our surveyors and valuers. So, they may pursue their registration and become registered surveyors and valuers in the Ministry.

MR. P. CIRIIYASAWA.- Just in addition to what our DCS had mentioned, you will be aware that there are tracks of work that are currently implemented across the Ministry, two of which the review of the Integrated Road Development Framework. The honourable Jovesa Vocea would be aware of this and, of course, the review of the *iTaukei* Lands and Fisheries Commission. The shape and form this will take will have a bearing on our planning processes, so that will probably down the line not only dictate but it will shape how things will pan out in proper strategic planning review process.

MR. M. TUNIDAU.- Deputy Chairman, **Question 17**, is directed to the effectiveness of the Land Bank Programme and LOUs benefit from the programme itself.

In administration of the designated land under the Land Use Act.

a) What is the effectiveness of the Land Bank Programme?

The Land Bank Programme provides continuous consultation, public awareness, including visitations to landowning units.

- LOU grievances are also attended to and result as and when issues arise;
- The Division assist in the upgrade of the living standards as well and the livelihood of the land-owning units;
- Issuance of memorandum of leases, and;
- So far, the Ministry under the Land Use Division has issued 98 leases till to date. Also the enhancement of living standards, such as improving infrastructure, housing and sanitation. Lease money for children under 18 are saved in their respective bank accounts through the respective trust as agreed and discussed in their annual general meeting.
- Investment opportunities for unforeseen circumstances for the future generation. Future generation funds, humanitarian funds are kept aside for the future use of *mataqali*. This is also for mining and extraction leases only.

Also, one of the points to note that the education and scholarship opportunities created through their respective Trust.

b) The land-owning units benefit from the land bank through this programme that landowners are receiving 100 percent returns are released to LOUs and free survey of the land for development.

One of the benefits as well is that there are continuous dialogues and communication between the land-owning units and the Ministry:

- Assistance is provided as well to the LOUs in compiling their financial statements, providing financial literacy to LOUs and making informed financial decisions; and
- also encouraging the LOUs to utilise their vacant land instead of lying idle.

One of the benefits of the Land Reform Initiative Programme, it encourages Development with Justice – an initiative that encourages both investors and services to grow.

For land bank, it provides a healthy alternative for the *iTaukei* landowners in the administration of their land. It is also fair to the lessees and investors and the landowners alike, allowing them to share equitably in the benefits and the risks as well. The beauty of leases disbursed by the land bank is the onus remains with the LOU on the utilisation of their lease monies as mandated by their respective Deed of Trust.

In addition to that, Deputy Chairman, may I, as a directive from our Permanent Secretary, we also explored the carbon market initiative as well. There are vacant lands at the Land Use Division also for this carbon market initiative and we are working towards that drive as directed by our PS.

Just in addition, the Land Use Division is also reviewing the Land Use Act for better services to the landowners and the public as well.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Deputy Chairman, just in addition we are trying to explore synergies and complementarity working and not competing with iTLTB. I think as mentioned by our Manager Land Use, we have got positive feedback from the public, those that have designated their land within the Land Use Division, and hopefully down the line, we could showcase the benefits and cost involved in terms of uptake, not in competition, but as a complementarity to that, that is offered by iTLTB.

Deputy Chairman, Sir, that concludes our presentation on our responses to the 17 questions. I note that there has been communication from the Secretariat that there are supplementary questions that we can respond to. The team stands ready to respond accordingly this morning.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, PS, and thank you to the team for a very comprehensive submission; a very informative one. I will open the floor for questions and discussions.

In leading with a question, in terms of Question 1, why the Committee asked for clarification on that is because we have received reports from other Ministries, prior to 2022 but addressed to the current Ministers. So, we thought we will have some sort of clarity in there and some sort of standard set so that we know whom to be addressed in terms of reports - is it the current Minister or the Minister who was at that period of the report?

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Deputy Chairman, through you, just a supplementary question on the land utilisation. This is in regard to some land were developed for certain purpose like Lakena, it was for rice farming and now it has switched to agriculture - root crop farming. A few weeks ago when we visited that place, they have been rezoning it into commercial purpose. The owners are based overseas. They started selling the land for \$1.3 million and \$1.5 million. What is the plan? What is the intention of the Lands Department? Can you elaborate more on that issue, please?

MR. J. VUNIAMATANA.- Yes, we have had some rezoning applications come though the Ministry. I understand the concern coming with regards to the usage of agricultural land, specifically with regards to the rice lands in Lakena. Just for the forum to note that when we receive applications to rezone with the Ministry, our consultation is usually done with the other Ministries to get their comments specifically with the Ministry of Agriculture with regards to rezoning. When they do provide us with that support letter, then the Ministry goes ahead and approves this rezoning. Otherwise, the rezoning applications will not go through.

Also, as I had alluded to earlier on, we are now trying to finalise our Land Use Master Plan, not only for Central Eastern but for the whole of Fiji. This is something that I mentioned earlier on, is going to be a guiding document with regards to giving those approvals, not only for rezoning but for subdivisions, for transfers and any other dealings on State land. So, once we are complete with that, issued with a document that the Ministry will use, we understand that iTLTB is simultaneously completing off their Land Use Master Plan. We are working together with them to ensure that when our Land Use Master Plan completes, it complements the work that is currently being done by iTLTB and should also give us a better position to give a good decision on those applications for rezoning.

MR. A. VULAWALU.- Further to the comments that has been raised by the Director of Lands, some of the factors that leads to the rezoning of these agricultural leases, normally we consult the line Ministry which is the Ministry of Agriculture to produce their report.

There are some factors that states that land is unsuitable for agricultural purposes because it is frequently affected by flooding. Those are some of the major factors. So, with consideration to those types of factors, we allow for them to rezone their land for higher use so that we can have better returns to them and also to the State in terms of land rent that is collected from them and the economic activities as undertaken on that piece of land.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Just to add on to what honourable Ravu has said, our concern is, and it is something that was discussed in the Committee, alot of prime State land is left idle. The leases have been given to the leaseholders but it is not being used. Land is a scarce resource especially prime State land. It is kept idle and then later on sold for a profit. Our issue here is with the Committee that this land should be better utilised, not left idle. How is the Ministry working to ensure that the land which is leased to them is used and not left idle?

MR. A. VULAWALU.- Deputy Chairman, for land that is identified to be unutilised by the lessees, our Lease Inspectors through our Divisional Managers are working hard on that to task our Lease Inspectors to identify these idle lands. Normally the process that we undertake is to issue breach notices to individual lessees. The Act regulates how we proceed with these breach notices that is served to our lessees.

The first notice is three months and then the second notice is 30 days, the final notice is seven days. If we fail to rectify within this period, the onus is on the Director of Lands to cancel their lease. Once the lease is cancelled, we advertise it through the newspaper for members of the public who have any interest to cultivate or utilise that land to develop it according to its purpose. That is basically the process that we undertake under the State Lands Act. If you refer to our website right now, we have a couple of State lands that have been advertised for the media, for the members of the public to express their interest to apply for this land and utilise it to its purpose.

HON. V. NATH.- Deputy Chairman, through you, the process which you just explained, Assistant Director, thank you for the explanation. I must declare my personal interest in this. The prime land in Kinoya, the junction at Kinoya, opposite the World Harvest is a car wash. That land was advertised and I personally applied for it. I went for an interview with my PowerPoint presentation, it is a prime land, and it was given to the same owner, I believe, who was overseas. What happens now? There was supposed to be a building there, do you still monitor that or just give it away?

MR. J. VUNIAMATANA.- Honourable Deputy Chairman, through you, yes, I think we have touched on the conditions of the lease. The conditions of the lease gives a timeline for when they will need to construct a building that will fit for the lease type that is issued for. For those lessees that currently hold leases in Fiji and are abroad, we have a clause where that addresses absentee lessees. But for those that are abroad, they usually give power of attorney to people who can hold and manage the properties while they are abroad; that also is acceptable by us.

But for those, let us say, for example an agricultural land where the lessee has deserted the land, no cultivation at all, that is multiple breach on its own. But, yes, the lease condition directs the lessees on when they will need to build, when they will need to start cultivating on the land, the timelines are there. So, when they do not meet these timelines, that is when we start to issue those breach notice that was alluded to earlier on by the Assistant Director.

HON. V. NATH.- Deputy Chairman, the underground water monitoring, I thank your department for doing successful projects at Savusavu Primary School and Namaka. It was very good and a well-managed project and I congratulate you and your team. I understand many applications are being made to identify the pool of water because you have high technical equipment. Would you be able to tell us the number of applications or requests made from the public or from Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) or Commissioner's Office to your department?

MR. I. DOKONIVALU.-Thank you very much for your compliments, Sir. As you may be aware, the Ministry received an increased budget this year for groundwater development. We have been given a target to meet. We have set up a task force to drive this project and this task force includes the major stakeholders. We have had a number of fruitful meetings and through this, we have received a list of communities as you had alluded to - WAF, Ministry for Rural and Maritime, Ministry for Health and also from direct applications. Right now, Sir, we have about over 800 communities in our list.

HON. V. NATH.- Deputy Chairman, just a suggestion, during your budget consultation or budget submission, you can request the Commissioner's Officers, this is very important because during a dry spell, you will find a lot of money is being used to deliver water like from Kasavu and the Momi. All these places are red zone, and I understand the team knows about it. So, probably you can make an application to increase the budget so that maybe the Ministry for Rural and Development can save some money if you are able to deliver to these areas.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Deputy Chairman, through you, in response and in addition to what our Manager Geological Services had mentioned, the task force is made up of WAF, Ministry for Rural and Maritime Development and Ministry for Health. So, part of the work that they are doing is, we are going to outsource. I think the current capacity within, we cannot handle the target of probably 1,000 boreholes. So, what we have done we have kind of outsourced about 39 boreholes and 40 will follow suit to big companies that will do the job for us.

Having said that, for the 18 boreholes that we have, WAF will do that job for us in terms of reticulation. It is the first time that the Ministry through the Mineral Resource Department received that budget. I think we are trying to work our way. The team are quite overwhelmed, but I think we are impressed, and we have committed to ensuring that come 31st May, we will complete about 80 to 90 boreholes. That is a target. And of course, on the point that honourable Vijay Nath had mentioned, the team have got a set criteria of about three pre-requisites in terms of what they use in terms of priority ranking to identify, not always done by the team at MRD but it is done in consultation with the experts from WAF and others.

Having said that, I think even the Ministry for Rural and Maritime Development are working on this sort of desalination endeavour. This is coming up in the next fiscal year. These are some of the things with the taskforce people are now talking to each other. Hopefully we can better deliver safe drinking water to our communities.

HON. J.R. VOCEA.- Deputy Chairman, through you, some of the tasks that we do in the Ministry for Rural and Maritime, building rural roads and even with agriculture farm roads. Some of the challenges that we face in these projects are the supply of gravel. Some of the communities have gravels with them. They can say, "this is our contribution, you make this road and we contribute with this gravel" but there are challenges - EIA and maybe the Ministry will know more about this. I just want to ask what is the Ministry's stand stands if there are some communities who would like to give their gravel for free for the purpose only of building their roads - farm roads or the roads right up to their settlement of their village. Can there be a leeway given to them to easily use the gravel just for the purpose only of that project?

MR. J. VUNIAMATANA.- Deputy Chairman, through you, yes, we have received some applications for extraction of gravel for the maintenance of some access roads. We have had to process them. For this request, we have had not to go through the whole processes that we have for the normal gravel extraction licences. For this, we understand they are to be used by the community. There are some requirements by the environment that has been waived for those. And, yes, for those requests, they also have been processed and approved by the Department probably without some of the major requirements that we have for the normal gravel extraction license that have been catered for by the Ministry. So yes, we have been receiving and also approving some applications with regards to those.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Sir, I would just request if our Divisional Lands Manager Central/Eastern can just add on the recent collaboration with Provincial Administrator (Namosi) on the construction of a new road.

MR. W. ROBERT.- Deputy Chairman, through you, this is one of the collaborations between the Namosi Provincial Council and the Ministry in terms of constructing the Wainabua and Wainimakutu Road in the Namosi Province. The Ministry together with the Provincial Council has started discussions on the possibility of waiving the rightful owners or waiver of *i qoliqoli* that has initially led to the ongoing project between the stakeholders. With that being said, the PA Namosi has started to extract minerals within the Wainabua Creek and ongoing consultation with the other landowners will be done to complete the construction of the gravel road through the Namosi Province.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Just leading on to the question from honourable Vocea, the Committee has been aware that there is a community along the King's highway. They were extracting gravel from the river to do a church hall. Halfway within the project, they were asked to stop, and they were not using any excavators, just shovel and bags. Is there any possibility of allowing those kinds of extractions to be used within their community to build houses or church halls which are community projects. I believe that project is on hold at the moment because they were asked to get gravel from Tailevu which is quite far and expensive. Is there a provision within the Ministry to allow villages to extract for their houses or community halls using the gravel within their village?

MR. J. VUNIAMATANA.- Yes, I guess when those applications reach our office, it is the nature of applications that we look at. If it is not for commercial use then definitely if it is for community, we will allow that. If it is for commercial use, then they go through the whole requirements that we have – the full EIA, waiver of fishing rights and other requirements. But if it is for community use, I am not too sure about this specific case, yes, those are received by the office and are processed accordingly with regards to the usage of these materials. If it is to be used by the community for construction of a hall or roads, they are processed accordingly.

HON. I. TUIWAILEVU.- Deputy Chair, they still have to inform you, for the community use?

MR. A. VULAWALU.- I think it is important that proper approval is obtained from the Director of Lands because sometimes some other operators complained to us because no approval was obtained. It is important that proper approval is obtained from the Director of Lands just to state for them to dig it with it with free will. On top of that, we also have our river gravel monitors who can work out the volume of the gravel that is available there and give us the figures of how much they can extract so that they can be allowed to extract that volume that is required.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Deputy Chairman, Sir, on that, probably we can get the details and the team can respond accordingly.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- I will forward you the details after this meeting.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.-Thank you, Sir.

HON. I. TUIWAILEVU.- Deputy Chairman, through you, just a matter of clarification regarding the Nawailevu Bauxite. My question is the value of the standing trees equivalent to the bauxite extracted on the land area?

MR. A.VULAWALU.- Deputy Chairman, through you, we do not really have the exact figures, but I am sure it will not be the same value. The different commodities are based on different values. Bauxite was valued then and this globally dictated the value of minerals, similarly to the pines. I do not think they are of the same value but for the Department, Nawailevu with all the challenges or with all the stories that are being passed around, at least somehow one of the success stories of the Department. Of course, they applied for mining lease, they came and mined and then they fully rehabilitated the site. That was the success story of Nawailevu.

HON. J.R. VOCEA.- This is not a question but just to commend the Ministry with the new leadership now that they have already allowed in-service training for their staff to go and study overseas with full pay. I remember a few years back, most of the staff from the Ministry who went to study, some leave without pay, some had to resign and some very valuable staff of the Ministry were lost because they did not have bonds with the Ministry. Now they are again starting with the initiative of sending them on leave with pay so that they come back and be useful in the Ministry. I just want to commend the Ministry for that.

HON. V. NATH.- Deputy Chairman, I think the Director mentioned about mangrove planting. How successful is that project?

MR. J. VUNIAMATANA.- Through you, Deputy Chairman, I have mentioned before that we have had to receive some applications for mangrove planting by some organisations as part of the activity. We have granted consents on those. Majority of those had been done along the foreshores of Suva and we have had to grant consent to them. Once we get consent from the Ministry for Lands, they go to the Ministry for Forestry and they probably get more technical advice from them to assist them with regards to the replanting of these mangroves. I am taking it as a community, something that they are trying to give back to the community and also when we grant those approvals it is with regards to mitigation against climate change. For those reasons, the approvals have been given from the Ministry.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Just one final one adding to honourable Vocea's remarks. Staff retention is very important and I know the Ministry is working on a certain salary band or wage limit, but there should be other innovative ways where we can retain them just like training and providing them with opportunities to develop themselves. And also, the final one is the boreholes that the Ministry has done. Do you have a stock-take of all the boreholes that has been done around the country and its usage? How many of them are idle? How many of them are being used and their availability in times of need?

MR. I. DOKONIVALU.- We have a database in the Department that has the records of all the boreholes that have been drilled in the country since the inception of groundwater drilling. It has details of these boreholes and if they have been articulated. We also have a programme, the groundwater monitoring programme. This programme is very important for us as that is the opportunity for the division to monitor, to visit these boreholes that we have in our database. For instance, we had a team deployed to Yasawa a few years back and they got very important information about the boreholes that the community have left idle but did not know what to do with them. So, they brought that information back and we have formulated

plans to address them. Groundwater monitoring is the process that we monitor these boreholes and ensure that they are being used for the purpose.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Deputy Chairman, in addition to that, we are on the verge of commissioning some of our boreholes this year. Part of the plan is normally when we commission, a ceremony and we just handover. I think the thinking now is for us to come up with a handover template. I used to work in Government, spent six years in UNDP and now I am back in Government. There is this practice that when we handover the borehole, we want to put everything, what government had paid in terms of procurement and the personal cost.

In terms of accountability and ownership, that is very key. We want communities to see when they receive the boreholes, when we hand over the boreholes to them, they get a full picture of how much government had spent and the personal cost that had accrued in the construction of those boreholes. That is the plan we want to have in terms of ownership.

We have had experience in the past, after a few years, in terms of upkeep and maintenance, when we handover to the water committee, community or the village, we want them to see. I think the notion is when you see the dollar value, it will remind you to keep it in good faith.

Also, you mentioned about staff retention, that is something that when I came back, there was a time in government when the civil service was the employer of choice. People will stay not because of the pay, because of loyalty and leadership. This is something that we are working on and I know that with your guidance in Parliament and what gets trickled down to the civil service, this is something that we can retain our best people. I have been telling our colleagues, “you cannot compare what you went through, the time it took for you to get promoted, you cannot compare to the young people who are coming up the chain.” These young kids are much more smarter than compared to when you were that age back then. Retention is key and, of course, telling them that when people move up to senior level as part of their work, that is the core of what we need to retain. So, that is something that the team, both directors and of course with our management team are working on.

The Ministry, both departments are very technical in nature. We train people, they move up. Hopefully in the next few years down the line, we will be able to retain the best people that we trained so far.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Any final comments?

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Deputy Chairman, and honourable Members of the Committee on behalf of the honourable Minister of Lands and Mineral Resources, I would like to take this opportunity to be here this morning. It is my first time. I know that my colleagues have been here a couple of times. We thank you for the opportunity to share the work that we do in the Ministry.

Ever since I came in, I have told them that most people out there do not realise the extent of the work that we do at the Ministry. If you note that we have been sharing all of our videos, we want the people of this country and of course those abroad, the diaspora to have an appreciation of the extent of work that we do at the Department of Mineral Resources and of course the Department of Lands.

I know that there have been some issues regarding the consent over the years, we are working on that. It is a work in progress for us. We know that it is not perfect but the team, through the Director of Lands and the inspection team, we are trying to rectify this and consolidate a lot of the processes and

streamline to ensure that we better deliver the services that we need to deliver to our people. With that being said, thank you for the opportunity to be here this morning.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- I wish to sincerely thank all of you for availing yourselves today. We thank you all for your time and hope that you will avail yourselves if the Committee has any further questions or queries on this matter. Thank you very much for your time and you have a wonderful day, *vinaka*.

The Committee adjourned at 12.27 p.m.

[VERBATIM REPORT]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

MINISTRY OF LANDS AND MINERAL RESOURCES ANNUAL REPORT 2022 TO 2023

SUBMITTEE: Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources

VENUE: Big Committee Room, Parliament

DATE: Tuesday, 27th May, 2025

VERBATIM NOTES REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM (EAST/WEST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, ON 27TH MAY, 2025 AT 10.47 A.M.

Interviewee/Submittee: **Interviewee/ Submittee: Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources**

In Attendance:

(1)	Mr. Paula Cirikiyasawa	Permanent Secretary
(2)	Mr. Timoci Samisoni	Deputy Secretary
(3)	Mr. Josefa Vuniamatana	Director Lands
(4)	Ms. Selina Talemaisainiai	Director Corporate Service
(5)	Mr. Apisai Vulawalu	Asst. Director Lands
(6)	Mr. Marika Qalo	Manager Finance
(7)	Meze Anne Hicks	Manager Geospatial Information Management
(8)	Mr. Ilaitia Dokanivalu	Manager Geological Service Division
(9)	Ms. Elizabeth Cavuilati	Manager Policy Quality Assurance
(10)	Mr. Asakia Tabua	Surveyor-General
(11)	Mr. Nilesh Karan	Acting Manager Mines

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, members of media and the public, secretariat, dear viewers, ladies and gentlemen, very good morning to you all and it is a pleasure to welcome everyone especially to the viewers who are watching this session. I am privileged to chair this seventh submission meeting of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources which is being aired live on the Parliament's channel through the *Walesi* platform and live streamed through the Parliament's *Facebook* page. At the outset, for information purposes pursuant to Standing Order of Parliament, especially Standing Order 111, all Committee meetings are to be open to the public. Therefore, the submission meeting is open to the public and the 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. Do note that this will only be allowed in a few specific circumstances which includes national security matters, third-party confidentiality information, personnel or human resource matters, and meetings whereby the Committee deliberations on all issues before it and develop 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 Orders of Parliament. But 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 the protocols of this Committee meeting, please be advised that whilst the meeting is in progress, movement 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.- With us this morning we have the representatives from Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources who have been requested to provide a submission of the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources Annual Report for the period 2022 to 2023.

(Introduction of representatives from the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will now proceed into the submission and then, as I had mentioned, if there are any interjections, otherwise, we will have to wait until the end where we might have some supplementary questions leading up from your presentation.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, for the first question on the Land Surveyors. We will ask our Surveyor General to take us through.

Question No. 1

MR. A. TABUA.- Mr. Chairman, just on the surveys of backlog of files, we have provided our response.

The Ministry is currently prioritising the survey of expired leases and formalisation of illegal subdivisions across all four divisions. Due to the vast geographic coverage required, the Ministry has decentralised its survey operation by establishing a survey unit in our Lands Office in Nandi and also Rakiraki Office. This initiative allows survey teams to be close to their respective areas of service delivery, spend more time on these respective areas, also to improve coordination and expediting of service deliveries. As a result, the Ministry anticipates to significantly reduce the number of backlogs in these four divisions.

Supplementary Question No. 1(a)

We have provided the data in our response. We have broken it down into tenure and zoning.

For the number of survey plans that was approved in that financial year was a total of 863. For each tenure, we broke it down to freehold lands, State lands and iTaukei lands. Mr. Chairman, 194 survey plans was approved on freehold land and 83 on State lands and 586 on iTaukei lands. We have broken it down to tenure so it is clear as to how many leases and grades of title will be registered on each zone.

For Freehold lands on a number of residential lots, there were 621 and for commercial lots were 21, agricultural lots were 115, civic lots were 9 and also industrial lots were 7.

For State lands, there were 188 residential subdivisions – commercial lots were 4, agricultural lots were 39, civic lots were 4 and industrial lots were 12.

For iTaukei lands, the number of residential lots was 859, commercial lots were 33, agricultural lots were 26, civic lots were 17 and industrial lots were 26. So that brings the total number of residential lots to 1,668, commercial lots to 58, agricultural lots to 180, civic lots were 30 and industrial lots were 45.

Supplementary Question No. 1(b)

What are the key factors influencing the approval of delivery survey plans?

One of the major holdups on survey plan approval is the compliance to development condition imposed on all subdivisions. As clearly stated in our response, prior to the approval of the survey plan, all subdivisions

must go through a development process. A scheme plan is prepared by the surveyors, submitted to the Department of Town and Country Planning where they assess the application and impose conditions. These conditions are related to the construction of the roads which has to be constructed according to Fiji Roads Authority standards, drainage according to the council standards and also the construction of each lot needs to be in accordance to the Department of Town and Country Planning Act. If it is a sewer then it has to be 800 square metre to 1,000 square metres above. If it is unsewered then it has to be below 800 square metres. These are all the conditions that they need to comply.

The installation of the fire hydrants needs to be NFA standards. These are the development conditions that hold back some of the timely approval of the survey plan. Prior to the approval of the survey plan, one important document that needs to be submitted to the Surveyor General's office is the completion certificates from the council. This indicates that the subdivision complies with all the conditions from the Department of Town and Country Planning. Once we get that completion certificate, only then the Surveyor General can approve the survey plan with the clearance letter from the Director of Town and Country Planning. This is one of the major drawbacks in terms of timely approval of the survey plan because there is a process to go through before the survey plan is approved.

As alluded to earlier, the registration of the lease is subject to the approval of the survey plan. So by the time a lessee receives a lease, there is an assurance that the subdivision has complied with all the development conditions.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, the Ministry is embarking on the new initiative on this e-lodgement of surveys. For all government surveys, we are trying to lodge them through automated means. We piloted that mid last month. Hopefully, we should include all other private surveyors to what this should have been intended for. That is an initiative from the Ministry, this is part of trying to fast track a lot of these processes as alluded to by our Surveyor General. A lot of these processes are still manually done.

For State leases, survey leases, then that comes to the Director for his approval and consent, and of course, this is something that we have been working on, it has been part of this backlog. You might be aware that this has been some of the recurring issues that appears on the subsequent annual report that comes out of the Ministry. Hopefully, we will bore the results and we should be able to update Parliament if it comes through in the latter part of the year.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- On Gender Analysis, I will invite our Director Corporate Service to take us through this.

Question No. 2

MR. I. DOKANIVALU.- In terms of the gender analysis within the Ministry, there are measures that have been implemented in terms of training, whereby female staff are being sent out overseas on training. This is based on merit, and in terms of empowerment, we encourage females within the Ministry to pursue their registrations in terms of their respective fields, and likewise increase their participation in special fields, such as the surveyors, geologists, and likewise the hydrogeologists. In addition to the response provided, the Ministry has also extended its focus area in terms of the gender-responsive budgeting to our ongoing PSIP and our new PSIP.

To some of these projects, we conduct gender analysis, addressing gender gaps on issues regarding women, children, and the disabled. This was also part of our budget proposal, in which we had factored in costs to ensure that women and children and the disabled have access to all the activities that are offered by the Ministry.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- DCS, can you expound on that a bit, please?

MS. S. TALEMAISAINIAI.- The Ministry currently has 42 percent representation in its management team, female-orientated, the rest are males. We continue to fluctuate the numbers, but our management team is fairly represented with the female gender over the last couple of years, and we continue to appoint female officers to management positions on merit, and of course through encouragement by our leaders to empower them to pursue positions that would predominantly be male-dominated.

If I may just expand a little bit more on the last point that we mentioned in our response, this is something that we have incorporated to support our gender reporting to the Ministry of Women. We are trying to incorporate where we collect data in regards to women representation in communities in the services that we provide, particularly, we have started with our hydrogeology unit, who go out into the field and drill boreholes for communities in isolated and water-limited areas. What happens is we have started, I believe last year, having a register to collect data on women that have been impacted or benefited from the water that has been provided through our services in hydrogeology.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, we invite our Manager Geospatial Information Management, (GIM) to expand on that a bit further before we move on to the third question, please.

MS. M. HICKS.- Mr. Chairman, just in addition to what has been mentioned already with regards to the surveying profession, while in 2023 there has not been any registered surveyor, while in that process, we had a female officer who had gone through the registration in terms of having projects. We are happy to advise the Committee that as in this year, we had one female registered surveyor. That is a very good progress in terms of females in this particular field.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, in summary, these are very delicate and sensitive issues. In the Ministry, there is a lot of masculinity framing. So part of that is to address this, part of my role, as mentioned by the colleagues. We are encouraging women participation and of course there are some women leaders in the Ministry that have not been overseas. I even asked someone to attend COP last year and she stood up and said that they are not allowed to. Then I said, “Hey, I am Permanent Secretary, this is my role to expose you to COP.” These are the kind of things that we are doing. From my end, there has been a realignment of our structure in the Ministry and such a lady has taken on board our policy division, which is, I think for gender empowerment, this is what gender empowerment is. It is very important to the role we play as leaders that we ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity. If someone is working hard, regardless of his or her gender, they deserve a pat on the back and, of course, to elevate the status within the Ministry. That is something that we are encouraging and in my position as Permanent Secretary, as I mentioned, this has been filtered right through the colleagues that are sitting here and right through the bottom tier of the Ministry personnel.

Mr. Chairman, we will move on, with your permission, for question number three. We have here our Acting Manager Mines, Mr. Nilesh Karan will take us through.

Question No. 3

MR. N. KARAN.- Mr. Chairman, on the review of the Mining Act and the update on the current status of the review, the Mining Act currently being used was enacted in 1965 with the most recent amendment to the legislation was done in 2016.

Under the consequential amendments, that is the revised 1965 version that we are currently using. The review of the Mining Act started in 1998 and is currently in the 11 draft produced in 2006 and it is also known

as the Mineral Exploration and Exploitation Bill. In 2013, the American Bar Association undertook a review of the Bill. However, the recommendation was not firmly accepted. So in 2018, the representative from the Ministry collaborated with the Intergovernmental Forum on mining to lead the review of the legislation. The policy framework process was completed in 2022. The report has been validated with IGF in 2025. The actual review process, the Director of Mines has commenced discussion with the Intergovernmental Forum and currently discussing the terms of reference with the aim of completing the review by July 2026. That is the update on the review of the Mining Act.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- On Question No. 4 , Mr. Chairman, as stated in the actual submission, there was no payout for mineral exploration during that financial year. We'll move onto the next question.

We will ask our Assistant Director to take us through, please.

Question No. 5

MR. A. VULAWALU.- Mr. Chairman, through you, the answer to the question on illegal extraction of gravel. The issue of illegal extraction of gravel has been a growing concern. Can the Ministry please provide an update on the current status of this issue?

Our response to this question, the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources has created four posts specifically for the administration and management of River Gravel & Aggregate in Fiji. They are the Technical Assistant – Natural Resource Development Officers post with their salary bracket beginning from \$20,056 per annum. The main role is to provide regular monitoring of river gravel, licence and expired licensed sites.

This is to help reduce or eliminate possible illegal river gravel extractions. The contractors and suppliers of river aggregate on many occasions return to expired sites to access supplies due to high quality of river aggregate from these sites. So the main role of these officers is to ensure that these licence holders fully abide or comply with the conditions of their licence and not deviate from it. Also to prevent any illegal operations committed by them or those without a licence.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, Question No. 6 on Nukurua Mahogany, even though the written brief is there, I understand that your team had visited our survey colleagues last week. I suggest we proceed to the next question.

We will ask our Director Lands to take us through.

Question No. 7

MR. J. VUNIAMATANA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, on the question of premium. In simple terms, premium is rent paid in advance. This is something that is paid in accordance to the Lands Department policy. The clients are usually given two options with regards to premium, either they pay a premium and reduce rental, or if they wish to do without the premium payment, they pay the full market rental. The premium is paid on all zones of leases that are issued except agricultural lease. The explanation on the calculation is there before you. It is based on 20 percent of the unimproved capital value of the land.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, for the next question, we will ask our Deputy Secretary to take us through on the collection of land rent.

Question No. 8

MR. T. SAMISONI.- You have noted the response that has been provided by the Ministry. The revenue collected for the financial year 2023 is \$23.086 million compared to the collection in 2022 which was \$20.58 million. The question is for the Ministry to please explain how the excess was achieved.

You will note from the response that has been provided, the breakdown of each revenue that has been collected by the Ministry, most of the increase was the revenue that had been collected apart from the normal land rent and other fees and charges. The miscellaneous had a vast increase from \$1.5 million to \$5.6 million. That miscellaneous includes fees collected from the public visiting Nukulau and also in terms of other fees that are not classified under the sales revenue and the agency revenue. Those have all been collected like sale of maps and other types of fees that has been collected by the Ministry. That is basically the justification of the increase in revenue considering the collection in 2022 as compared to the collection in 2023 financial year.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, we will move onto the next question on the Summary of Boreholes. We will request the Assistant Director MRD to take us through very briefly.

Question No. 9

MR. A. VULAWALU.- Mr. Chairman, through you, all boreholes were drilled, developed, constructed, and completed conforming to acceptable international standards. These boreholes were sanitised and the groundwater and aquifer tested for quality and capacity, respectively.

The pumping system selected for each borehole is selected to ensure groundwater abstraction is sustainable for the resource and the infrastructure installed. The borehole water sources are critical for the health, security, and improved standard of living for vulnerable rural communities, as such, compliance to minimum acceptable standards is important.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, we will move onto the next question on the review of old legislations. We will ask our Manager of Policy to take us through, please.

Question No. 10

MS. E. CAVUILATI.- Mr. Chairman, through you, I believe Manager Mines has elaborated on the review of the Mining Act. As of this year and next year, we will be conducting public consultation in regards to the review of the Mining Act. As of last week, the Minister had presented the review of the State Lands Act 1945 which has been approved by Cabinet. The Ministry will work on the review of the State Lands Act as of this year.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- In addition, Mr. Chairman, we are taking an information paper to Cabinet on the review of the Mining Act and our game plan to take it through. As 'the Committee is aware, this has generated a lot of discussions in social media and around the circle within the country. This is something that the Ministry is working earnestly to ensure that this review process gets knuckled down during the year.

We will move onto the next question on the Survey, we will ask our Surveyor General to take us through.

Question No. 11

MR. A. TABUA.- Mr. Chairman, we have tabulated the number of vacant State Land in divisions. In the Western Division, there are 1,959 lots that are vacant and for the Northern Division there are 262 and for the Central/Eastern Division there are 730 lots. The total number of vacant State Land lots are 2,951 with an area of 17,184 hectares.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, we will move onto the next question on State Land Management. I invite our Director Lands to take us through.

Question No. 12

MR. J. VUNIAMATANA.- Mr. Chairman, for State land allocation, there is a Standard Operating Procedure in place whereby all land that is available for leasing is publicly advertised for transparency to provide members of the public rules of fair go in applying for State land. There are some instances where land foregoes this process, but for these cases, it is required that this request be tabled before the honourable Minister, whereby he makes his decision on the allocation.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, on the next question on Land Ownership and Disputes. Again, we will our Director Lands to take us through.

Question No. 13

MR. J. VUNIAMATANA.- Mr. Chairman, the question is directed at land ownership disputes, whether the Ministry handles these cases. The quickest answer to that is no. For land ownership disputes, they are directed to the authority which is the iTaukei Land Trust Board and through the iTaukei Land and Fisheries Commission.

MR. P. CIRIKIKASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, moving further on Mineral Resources and Exploration, I invite our Acting Manager Mines to take us through, please.

Question No. 14

MR. N. KARAN.- Mr. Chairman, the Ministry oversees mineral exploration and mining licences throughout Fiji, and it currently has about 36 valid exploration licences. A number of them have progressed to advanced exploration stage, and currently at feasibility studies. That is probably prior to mining. Three mining projects/companies are active in Fiji at the moment, that is, Vatukoula, Line One Metals Limited and MX Resources. A few of these projects are sort of on the verge of coming onto the mining phase. We anticipate that Wainunu Bauxite and Kulukulu Ironsands to come on board as mining projects in the next few years.

The Ministry also reviews all the exploration works done by the companies on a quarterly basis and also companies are submitting their quarterly reports, annual reports, which is thoroughly assessed to ensure that the companies are abiding by the licence conditions. In terms of sustainability, all the projects go through a comprehensive EIA process that is administered by the Department of Environment in collaboration with the Mineral Resources Department. For exploration projects, the environment management plan is suffice. So basically, EIA takes care of the mining projects in terms of their operations.

In terms of monitoring and audits, we have our normal regular inspections. We have reduced the term in terms of doing inspections from quarterly to bi-monthly to ensure that all companies are complying with the condition of their leases.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.-Mr. Chairman, in addition, for the benefit of the Committee members, I think the distinction is for prospecting purposes, you are issued a licence - special prospecting licence. If that graduates, if there is prospect for mining, then the Government through MRD will issue the lease. If you may be aware, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, we have probably been the subject of controversy in the past few months on Vatukoula. For us, as a Ministry and through the Mineral Resources Department, we are trying to ramp up and improve our regulatory oversight and our systems and processes, something that has been

effectively done in the past, but we have quietened down in the past few years. We intend to ramp that up as we progress onwards.

We move on to the next question on Technology and Modernisation and we request our Manager GIM to take us through.

Question No. 15

MS. M. HICKS.- Mr. Chairman, with regards to the use of technology and modernisation, the Ministry has currently in place two platforms called the Vanua GIS, which is for government agencies and the Vanua View Platform available to the public, which is free. Also, they can access scan survey plans. This is also available to the public for free.

Developments using technology, in 2023, the Ministry launched the online State land application portal, whereby members of the public can apply for vacant State land that is advertised. We have been making use of technology in order to be able to better reach the members of the public should they be interested to apply for State land.

We also have as part of making use of technology is a portal called MyLeaseInfo. This is for our existing State lessees. They can access this portal and find out information with regards to their leases. In addition to that, we have also included within this portal a component called “consent applications”. Instead of having to manually apply for consent to the Director of Lands, they can go on the portal and apply for consent.

We have also been working on digitising our records. We have had issues with regards to our records, which are mostly paper-based. We have a project where we are scanning all our State lease files, and we are working towards developing a system where we are going to automate the processing of all State land applications and our consent applications. The Ministry has also been working towards using various survey instruments, mapping instruments to improve the way that we carry out our operations so that we are able to better serve our customers. As mentioned by the Permanent Secretary, we have also launched this year ePlan Lodgement Portal where we are piloting with our Lands Department surveyors and eventually we will be moving out to other registered surveyors in the private sector. The next phase of this ePlan Lodgement System will be to automate the checking of all survey plans where there will be very little human intervention and we trust that this particular initiative will reduce the turnaround time for approval of survey plans.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, moving onto the next question on Land Allocation and Investment. We will request our Acting Director Lands to take us through.

Question No. 16

MR. A. VULAWALU.- Mr. Chairman, lands that are available for lease are normally advertised in the local dailies, that is, in the *Fiji Sun*, and also on the Ministry website for members of the public who are interested to apply for land to lodge their applications for land that is being advertised. It depends on the types of land that are available, irrespective of the type of use, whether it is residential or commercial or industrial or for agriculture. If those are available, it will be advertised in the newspaper and also in our website. We also have the application in our online database, whereby those members of the public who are interested to apply, they can lodge their applications online.

For part (b), there are initiatives of policies aimed at improving land access for local businesses and communities in rural or undeveloped areas. As already being alluded to by our Manager GIM we have the platforms already available on the internet, mostly in the Ministry’s website, whereby members of the public can

access their land information in the MyLeaseInfo database. Irrespective of where they are located, if they are able to access internet in their mobile phones, they are able to access all this information. Likewise, if they want to apply for land, they can also use their mobile phones or their laptops.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, probably in addition to that, with regards to land allocation, the Ministry is faced with ever-increasing competition for space. You will understand that Fiji, with just a little over 18,000 square kilometres under its purview, there is competition for space from the ever-increasing population of Fiji. There is competition for space from the different sectors, as alluded to by the Assistant Director, from the different sectors that want to have a piece of that 18,000 square kilometres of land for development.

Such being the case, I may have shared with the team in our previous appearance here, we now have a landuse master plan team that is doing the planning for all State land development in Fiji. They are working on the State landuse master plan for the different regions in Fiji. They have completed the Western Division. Upon completion of the Northern Division, which they are working on right now, they will work on the Central/Eastern Division, in the hope that with the completion of all this, we are able to put together a State landuse master plan for Fiji, whereby it will be a guiding document for us as managers in giving the approvals for land allocations.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, next question on Future Targets and Challenges. We will ask our Deputy Secretary to take us through.

Question No. 17

MR. T. SAMISONI.- Mr. Chairman, the response has been provided. Our target for the next coming years is mostly on capacity building. This is one of the target areas that the Ministry is focussing on, considering the high staff turnover in the Ministry. It is important that the Ministry ensures that capacity building continues to be provided and ensuring that the workforce have been well-equipped, well-trained to be able to deliver the services required of the Ministry. One that has also been alluded to by the Permanent Secretary and Director are in terms of the challenges that have also been faced by the Ministry in terms of surveyors and valuers, they need to be registered. This is also an area that the Ministry is focussing on, ensuring that surveyors and valuers are being registered in order for the Ministry to be able to continue to provide relevant services required.

Apart from that response, Mr. Chairman, one of the challenges that is currently being faced by the Ministry, I understand the team have visited some of the projects, is the provision of vehicles. That is also one of the challenges that has been faced by the Ministry. To address that, we have our submission to the Ministry of Finance, hoping to hear good news from them in terms of the provision of vehicles. Looking at the areas that our staff work in, especially the surveyors and those that deal with groundwater, they travel to high hills and rugged areas. Specialised vehicles are required for our staff to be able to travel to these areas. There are also some technical equipments that are required for the Ministry to be able to provide the services. To address this, we have also provided budget submissions to the Ministry of Finance, for this financial year, budget has also been provided and the Ministry have acquired relevant technical equipments relevant to be used by the Ministry to be able to provide the service efficiently.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Mr. Chairman, on the next question on the Environmental and Social Impact of mining, we will ask our Acting Manager Mines to take us through.

Question No. 18

MR. N. KARAN.- Mr. Chairman, to address this question, the Mining Division mandates early and ongoing consultations with landowners, local communities and other stakeholders. How we do that is, we have

planned meetings with the landowners. We have to include them in the project planning stages, fostering transparency and social acceptance. We organise consultations with landowning units where the Environment Unit presents on the geochemical data, which is collected during the inspections. So, the community is aware of the status of the environmental conditions. The Ministry also collaborates with the other government agencies such as the Department of Environment, Ministry of Forestry, Ministry of iTaukei Affairs to address any cross-sectoral concerns to ensure that the management of the natural resources and the environment is maintained at the desired level. Also we continue or maintain with our regular inspections and ensure that through these inspections and reporting, all the requirements and conditions are adhered to.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, just in addition to the latest spill from Mine One, the team left late yesterday. The Director and the environment team, as we speak, they are meeting the Commissioner Western. This team and our technical are meeting and his team and our technical team, they are meeting Lion One, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment to undertake further tests and determine the extent of the spill, damages and the compensation should that accrue that will come out of this process. Hopefully by Thursday, we should be able, either the Minister for Environment or the Minister for Lands will be able to make a press conference on what comes out of this process.

On the next question on Independent Auditor's Report – Emphasis of Matter, , we will ask our Manager Finance to take us through, please.

Question No. 19

MR. M. QALO.- Mr. Chairman, through you, in terms of the trust fund account for the Land Owning Units (LOU), for the Ministry, we had implemented a trust guideline which we have adhered to in terms of the facilitation of payments to the LOUs. This is done half yearly, as and when rentals are received from the investors. Further to that, we are also conducting an annual workshop, to allow all the trustees to come on board and we discuss issues that they face, and also address the requirements that the trustees need to understand when submitting Annual Financial Statements (AFS) for audit purposes, and the importance of the process in public financial management.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, on the next question on the criteria for the issuance of sand and gravel license. We have that criteria knotted out in our submission. It is quite straightforward, even for the private sector.

Mr. Chairman, through you, I suggest we stop here for now in response to the questions posed to the Ministry, then we will be at your disposal to respond to additional supplementary questions that may arise from the floor.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. I will now have a question and answer session, and I will be asking Members if they have supplementary questions to the questions that were sent to the Ministry. Before that, let me thank the Ministry for the report that has been presented to us through Parliament, which is a 2022-2023 Report, a very current report. There are other ministries that are providing old reports. We wish to acknowledge your Ministry for the very current report. It is always good to deal with current reports. It deals with current figures, current situations, and normally provides information for guidance towards proper planning for whichever ministries we represent. When we were discussing the report, we thought it has a lot of information about the Ministry, but it will have to be improved also to cater for information regarding the sector. We have seen reports that includes export figures, whether they are in volumes or whether they have financial representation. I think those are some of the things that people would want to know that are happening in the sector. We prefer to put that as part of our recommendation that we need to be looking at the whole sector rather than just the Ministry even though we are reporting on the Ministry work, there are interests, and because we have

an oversight of the Ministry's report, we would really want to take those into the report that we normally scrutinise.

I have an example, and this is on gender. We are reporting here the gender representation on the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources in terms of labour. There could be also some indication on the labour force that we have on the different areas that includes the gender. These are some of the things which we might consider writing back to the Ministry to improve on in terms of the report. As I mentioned, we took a field trip last week. We met with some stakeholders. We have reports on how EIAs are normally prepared, yet we encountered communities that were not happy with how the EIAs were conducted and this was in a particular instance where the waiver of the fishing right was not probably signed by the person or the group of fishing right owners. They become part of the problems that are normally associated when operations are normally carried out in the field. One of the things that came out on the trip that we had last week was the fact that the lands and mineral resources were doing their monthly monitoring. This was on a gravel extraction site. We had some concern for the communities that there had been some impact on their *qoliqoli* for the last few years, but the fact that the inspection was only done by one Ministry which they thought would be better off being also done together with Environment, which I think has got a very important role in the continuation or improvement of the standards. As I said, this was an experience that we had from a gravel extraction site.

Another was a concern that we had when we visited three of the boreholes that were mentioned in the report, a very current installation and improvement into the communities that would have helped if they had maintained the boreholes. Our experience was that the community were failing in maintaining boreholes either with the payment of the EFL bill or the lack of informing the Ministry on what they were going through so that that installation of a water pump would have been still working until now.

Of the three that we visited unfortunately, they were not really servicing the community because of one problem or the other. I wish the Ministry can take up having to go back into communities and do some monitoring programmes or processes after those projects have been launched. I think our Committee has got a number of questions, I now invite the honourable Members to ask further questions.

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Chairman, through you, once again I welcome all the ladies and gentlemen. First of all, I commend the hard work that the surveying team is doing at the Nukura Forest. We had a chance to meet them and it is about 40 kilometres from the King's Road and I believe they are camping there too. So it is hard work and I commend them.

Mr. Chairman, this probably would be the best forum if the Permanent Secretary could explain Question No. 20. We can make use of this live broadcast to educate people about the criteria for issuing the sand and river gravel licence. Why I request the Permanent Secretary to explain because the general public might need some knowledge on this. We have visited a number of places where the licence has been issued and we have seen the landslides. I will give you a typical example. We visited the Baulevu Road along King's Road from Nausori Town towards Kasavu. Where the banks are, particularly the height, very high if we extract from there. The Committee will agree that we have seen landslides there. Where the banks are, very shallow, normally about the height of over a few metres above the river level; there is very little or maybe no landslides and I have seen that in Nausori, especially along the Rewa River. A request, Mr. Chairman, with your permission if the Permanent Secretary can explain the criteria of issuing the licence.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, we will request our Assistant Director to take us through the issuance issue.

MR. A. VULAWALU.- Mr. Chairman, through you, the concern raised by the honourable Natha is noted. We note that there is a high demand in river gravel extraction by members of the public who have licences. It is

because of the high value that it offers in the market and the high returns that it generates, mostly to licence holders. We have seen that there are some non-licence holders who know the value of this resource, which is why, most of them also try to operate illegally without going through the formal process. There is a process that we have in place whereby those who are interested to venture into this business, to apply for a licence to operate, which is to extract gravels from the river and before they do their normal extraction activities, they need to provide the EIA report. The EIA is done by environmental consultants, and an EIA report needs to be approved by the Director of Environment. The main purpose of the EIA report is to mitigate the impact of the operation in the licenced area. It is really important for these operators to ensure that they comply fully with the conditions of this EIA and also to the conditions of the licence.

As you had mentioned, Sir, you have seen that if they extract mostly on the left side of the river, instead of operating on the centre line, which is one of the main requirements of EIA, there is a possibility of the side of that river being eroded into the water – that is to be expected. It is really important for these licence holders to ensure that they follow the requirements of EIA, which is for them to operate right in the middle of the river. That will mitigate the high chance of riverbanks on both sides from eroding into the river. That is very important.

While saying this, our monitoring officers are also conducting regular monitoring on these licence areas. Sometimes if need be, they will coordinate with the environment officers to ensure that they conduct joint site inspections to see if these operators are following whatever is in the EIA. Those are the things that we require our licence holders to do; to fully comply with the conditions of the licence and also the conditions of the EIA report.

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Chairman, a supplementary question. In fact, I requested for the process. The people need to know the processes in place. What I am trying to ask through the Permanent Secretary, I am talking about Nausori at this point in time. I visited Nausory Mosque. If you go along Manoca area, we are on the verge of losing King's Road and it will be a high cost to government. If I be corrected on that, Mr. Chairman, there are four groups of people who extract sand from there; along Rewa River from Manoca. Can they not be requested to go further down because I have gone through Rewa River and at the mouth of the river, there is a huge desilt. You have to wait for maybe high tide to take your boat because at low tide you cannot do so.

The sand is available in the lower Wainibokasi area, where the banks are not that high as compared to the Manoca area. Has there been any feasibility study done on this? I understand there is a buffer zone; no doubt about it. Who is monitoring – whether they put the pipe beyond that buffer zone or not? That is my personal experience as I am from Baulevu. I took my team, and they have fresh information. They have seen this happening. Your report says that the fishing rights owners' consent; not less than 60 percent of the owners, who are 18 years or above. However, people in Waidra and other areas catch *kai*. Baulevu is well known for *kai* and *dalo*. They find difficulties because the current of the water has increased, and they find it very difficult to dive in there and get *kai*. I have asked three questions, I hope you have an answer.

MR. A. VULAWALU.- As for desilting, desilting is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Waterways. Normally, they determine who is supposed to be the contractor that needs to be operating in that particular river for desilting purpose. They make recommendations to the Director of Lands for issuance of licence to whoever they have selected to conduct this desilting work. As for the other requirements, to obtain a licence, I failed to elaborate on your first question. First of all, the requirements are as follows: the formal application letter needs to be lodged by those who are interested to obtain a licence; accompanying that letter is the locality plan of the proposed extraction site; it has a fee of \$30 plus VAT; the signing of the fishing rights consent or waiver form which needs to be endorsed by the Roko Tui of the particular province; and once the Roko Tui has endorsed it, it has to go through the Chairman of iTaukei Fisheries Commission for ratification of that signature, just to ensure that whoever is signing is the rightful officer that needs to sign it; the access agreement between the landowner and the applicant, because they need to obtain an access approval to the river.

So they will need to obtain the access consent from whoever the landowner is; the approval from the Department of Environment for an EIA, that is very important; the resource assessment report, they need to provide the resource assessment report to ensure that there is a quantified amount of resources that needs to be extracted; a certified true copy of their TIN letter and the photo ID of the licensee. For companies, they will also need to produce their company registration certificate and the schedule of directors and shareholders needs to be provided too. Those are the requirements for those who are willing to apply for licence to extract sand or gravel from the river.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- With the interest of time that we have, and we have another submission around 12 o'clock, I will now request that we have three questions from Members before we round up our session this morning.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Through you, Mr. Chairman, *vinaka vakalevu* team Lands and Permanent Secretary. I commend the Ministry for the work that has been carried out through your respective areas.

Mr. Chairman, I have two questions. A question on the financial statement - page 56 on revenue. The financial statement highlights mining fees and licence fees which I understand is sourced from extension of mining companies, in contrast to the revenues generated locally through rent sales services charge, surveys et cetera. My question is, can the Ministry provide insights into the overall contribution of the mining industry to the national GDP?

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, ever since I started, the team at MRD have been working with the Fiji Bureau of Statistics on the quantification of the mining industry in the compilation of GDP. But I think since part of my former hat, I used to work at National Planning at the Macro Economic Division as a Macro Economist, probably I just shed light on the process of how GDP is calculated across the sectors. If you are aware, normally on two occasions the Reserve Bank of Fiji through the Governor makes announcements on the ideal growth rates, the projected and the actuals is announced by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics the following year. In the quantification of the sectors, the weightings are accorded to the respective sectors. If you note, when these announcements are made, mining is lumped up with quarrying as a line item in the GDP. Unfortunately, quarrying carries more weight than mining even though mining in terms of the capital, I think that is where honourable Ravu is based on, the amount of capital, the investment that is required, how that is captured in GDP. It is not the fact. As I mentioned, mining and quarrying, quarrying carries a lot of weight. Normally the weightings are reviewed on a periodic basis, ten to eight years. Normally that is up to the Chief Executive of the Fiji Bureau of Statistics and the team by IMF and Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC) and that is announced in the budget. However, this is something that we are trying to work very closely and it will end up, like I said, with the Ministry of Finance, Reserve Bank of Fiji and the Fiji Bureau of Statistics to actually quantify. If what I am saying now, in the next review, the baseline review of this, that could be taken on board and hopefully we will be able to quantify it directly from our side, and of course, even though that is announced in the successive budget, but this is something as an operational issue that we are working very closely with the Fiji Bureau of Statistics. I hope that answers the question, Sir.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, I think the Permanent Secretary had highlighted what we needed to ask, but just to highlight are few things during our visit. Our findings from Tuvatu Gold Mine, that is where the questions comes from – GDP contribution to national GDP. They showed us a bar of gold which costs \$1 million. Over the past few months, they exported 16 bars of gold which cost them \$17 million; 5 percent deduction on the cost of gold, 80 percent goes to the landowners' unit. As we are aware, mining is capital intensive endeavour, often involving the extraction of high valuable minerals, giving a significant investment required. Companies will naturally seek to recover their costs through legitimate means. It is the team's hope, that the trading of ores and other minerals remain transparent and free from black market interference. The question we ask, who is responsible for collecting, verifying data, et cetera that is not highlighted in the report.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, thank you honourable Ravu for raising that question. Late last night I was briefing the Minister on something I picked up in the operations of our mining division, and of course, we have been trying to improve our regulatory oversight since the Vatukoula Gold Mine episode. One thing that we are embarking on is improving our checklist. Ideally when something is about to be exported, we want our team to go in and inspect and actually get some sample on the quantity that is being exported. Ideally, over the years we have not got verifiable information on the extent of all minerals that are exported. So something that I shared with the Minister was, ideally all minerals that leave our shores, there has to be a royalty paid and payment has to be accorded to that. That should, in essence, be a significant part of the review of the Mining Act itself.

For Special Prospecting Licences (SPL), there are companies that take minerals overseas for testing purposes but there are no limits in the Act. We need to control that. This has not been done over the years, it has been over decades. So you can imagine SPL holders taking minerals outside on the guise of testing and prospecting, but those are the loopholes. We are not here to play the blame game. I think we are here to reset and map a pathway forward. As I mentioned, this is something that I shared with the Minister yesterday because of his concerns on what has been happening. That is what Manager Mines, as we speak, we have undertaken internal consultation on the checklist and I think in the last two weeks they were in the West with Lion One, Vatukoula and other companies for their comments and feedback on what we want to implement and undertake within the Ministry. Some of you may have been at the USS Blue Ridge, the US warship that was berthed in Suva Harbour. There was the celebration of Independence Day celebration. The CEO of Lion One was in that ship. He also attended the celebration. I met him then he asked me, “what is the purpose of this meeting?” That is a typical private sector telling that another layer of checklist is an added bureaucracy. I told him that we want to improve our regulatory oversight. We want them to respect the role that MRD play, but to have that, we have to knock down other systems and processes and tell them, “look, this is what you need to do, this is what you need to understand – for every mineral they need to send out of this country, they have to pay some sort of royalty or tax tagged to that.” That is the crux of where we are heading right now. The team at MRD are very much into this.

As I mentioned, we are taking the information paper to Cabinet, and hopefully when the review comes on board prior to that, even with our processes, we should be able to improve this moving forward. I even shared my email that I sent to the Director on his way down to convey my message to the CEO of Lion One saying that, a key to this endeavour is undertaking that Lion One will ensure that there will be no repetition of such irresponsible behaviour moving forward. That is very important, and I think not only from the Parliament, Cabinet, of course, we have a duty to play to protect the welfare and the safety of our people.

HON. T.R. MATASAWALEVU.- During our site visit, we had an opportunity to inspect the Lautoka Wharf site. We observed the extraction of magnetite ore from the Ba River mouth as these ores are being sent overseas for refining. Can the Ministry clarify how many different minerals can be extracted from the magnetite ore and what those minerals are?

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Acting Manager Mines, please.

MR. N. KARAN.- Mr. Chairman, this mining operation in Ba is targeting ironsand. The way the operation has been set up is basically to go for the mineral it is intending. So in our assessment through sampling, majority of the minerals in there is ironsand. That has been confirmed. As part of the mining operation, the place where the extraction is happening is basically in a delta area and comprise of mostly sand which is sand mixed with magnetite and also silt. Silt and sand is put back to the river as they are discarded but the magnetite, the main component is sort of extracted through the mining process. From the testing that we have done, the mineral that is going out is magnetite. This mineral that is going out is not like how bauxite was going out because

bauxite consists of all the soil where the mining is happening. But in this operation, it is only ironsand that is the target, that is extracted and being shipped.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Can I request that we will have the last question? We have another team waiting.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Supplementary question to that of honourable Nath in regards to the issuance of licence for sand and gravel extraction. I think one of the conditions should be that the operator from the local area must be given priority. The problem now, I see in Sigatoka for example, Semo and Tuva areas, the contractor who got the licence is from Nadi. When people buy gravel instead of extracting from Sigatoka, he gets it from Nadi and sells in Singatoga. The price of gravel is high. My request, look into this and if there is an operator in a local area, give the licence to that person.

MR. P. CIRIKIYASAWA.- Mr. Chairman, we will take that into consideration.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Vinaka Permanent Secretary. That brings to an end this submission. I wish to sincerely thank you all for availing yourselves for this 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. We also request that you extend to the Ministry staff of Lands and Mineral Resources our gratitude for the work that is being done, considering the constraints and challenges that they have and also to thank their families for their support. We look forward to meeting you in our next visit.

The Committee adjourned at 12.11 p.m.

Appendix 3

Research Papers



Annual Report Summary – for Standing Committee on Natural Resources

Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources 2021-2022 Annual Report

1.0 Introduction

This brief is presented to the Standing Committee on **Natural Resources** (SC-NR or "Committee") upon request from its Secretariat. It offers a comparative analysis summarizing the **Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources** Annual Report for the **2021-2022** financial year ending July 31st, 2022. This narrative is provided to assist the Committee in its assessment of the reports and is not intended to offer an in-depth evaluation of the Ministry's performance.

2.0 Review of Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources Annual Report

Activities	Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources (MLMR) 2021-22 AR ¹ Summary
Background	<p>The Ministry oversees the administration, development, and management of all State Land initiatives, including the mineral sector and groundwater resources. It manages 18,000 State Land leases, covering approximately 4% of Fiji's land mass.</p> <p>The Ministry's headquarters is located at the iTaukei Trust Fund Building Complex, Nasova in Suva, with its three (3) Divisional Offices located at the Fiji Public Service Credit Union Building, Gladstone Road, Suva and Lands Department Building in Lautoka and Macuata House in Labasa.</p> <p>The Ministry is dedicated to adopting a vibrant, equitable and dynamic management of Lands and Mineral Resources.</p> <p>For further information about the Ministry, please visit: https://www.lands.gov.fj/index.php</p>
Vision	Lands and Minerals for Life.
Mission	To effectively administer and regulate the land and mineral sector through sustainable and transformative legislation and policies.
Values	<p>The Ministry's values are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Honesty and Integrity - We dedicate ourselves to behaving honestly and with integrity in the civil service.2. Commitment - We are committed towards strengthening relationships with our customers and stakeholders.3. Responsiveness - We ensure to provide timely and sound advice to those who seek our services.4. Transparency and Accountability - We are accountable for our actions, and we make transparent decisions based on experience, and sound judgement.5. Inclusivity - We are an inclusive organization and will treat all persons equally and fairly.
Ministry's Highlights for the FY² 2021-2022	
<p>Some of the Ministry's highlights for the financial year include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Registration of three (3) surveyors	

¹ AR – Annual Report

² FY – Financial Year 2021-2022



- Handing over of the Savusavu and Nausori Town Valuation Roll
- Valuation conference
- Attending the National Stakeholder Consultation workshop to discuss and finalize Fiji's country level action.
- Representation at the international meetings and conferences, International Seminar United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management etc.

Land Administration Division

Achievements

Table 1: Land Administration Division Achievements for the FY 2021-22

No.	Activities	Achievements
1	Registration of Land Tenure	1,258
2	Licensed Offered	62
3	Transmission of State Schedule A&B Land	32
4	Ministerial Consent	73
5	Consent to Transfer	2,158
6	Advertisement of Available Lots	23

Challenges and Way Forward

Challenges and way forward are tabulated below:

No.	Challenges	Way Forward
1	Encounters during the Covid-19 period	Smart Maintenance of processes upon completion
2	Staff capacity building	Encourage multi-skilled workforce, staff rotation, and relative exposures as initiatives.
3	Illegal sand/gravel extraction	Enact a law on illegal sand/gravel extraction so that heavy penalty is issued.
4	External Factors	Continuing network improvements with relevant stakeholders.

Survey Division

Achievements

Table 2: Survey Division Achievements for the FY 2021-22

Target Output	Progress
Maintenance of Existing Subdivision	
1. Laqere Subdivision Construction of Access Road DSS 2088B	100% Completed
2. Upgrade 350m long and 3m wide Access Road at Naqoro Subdivision (BDSW 1412)	100% Completed
3. Existing Access Road M1750 (PT OF) SL 1176, T1670 & DP7197	100% Completed
Development of State Land	
4. Vakamasisuasua Subdivision	a. Endorsement of contract document b. Construction works commenced Setting out survey for road alignment c. Removal of existing kerbs, footpaths, cest pot and culvert



		d. Formation cul de sac extension e. Balkan beam and sand circle test f. Approval of Revise scheme and Engineering plan
	Survey Equipment Calibration	
	5. 45 calibrations	60 calibrations
	Ad – Hoc Survey Works	
	6. Land Title Survey for Waidamudamu Informal Settlement	completed
	7. Periphery redefinition survey of Queen Elizabeth Barracks, Suva	Completed
	8. Periphery redefinition survey of Nursing Station, Waivaka, Namosi	Completed
	9. Periphery redefinition survey Nasinu Correction Centre (FTG), Wainibuku, Naitasiri	Completed
	10. Periphery redefinition survey Nasinu Cemetery, Wainibuku, Naitasiri	Completed
	Exemption of Coordinates	
	11. Survey Plan	<p><u>DLOCE</u> SO 9236, SO 8010, DP 11705, SO 9298, DP 11854, SO 7944, SO 8392, DP 11478, SO 8817, SO 9631, SO 9681, SO 9344, SO 9826, SO 9185</p> <p><u>DLOW</u> SO 8486 – Vunisamaloa & Rarawai, Ba SO 9676 - Tavarau (pt. of), Ba DP 11913 – Nadarivatu, Tavua SO 9622 – Nakoke, Nadi SO 4285 – Nakoke, Nadi SO 9509 – Solowaru & Enamanu, Nadi SO 9568 – Rarawai & Vunisamaloa, Ba SO 9397 – Mamanuca-i-cake SO 7288 – Volivoli, Rakiraki SO 2450 – Volivoli, Rakiraki DP 11448 – Waqaliqali, Sigatoka</p> <p><u>DLON</u> SO 9678 – Vuniwai, Labasa DP 10793 – Bulileka, Labasa</p> <p><u>CONTROL</u> SO 9350 – Navua Town to Nabukavesi Village SO 8133 – Dromuninuku Village to Tacilevu Village SO 8193 – Tacilevu Village to Bagasau Village SO 8507 – Talenaua Village to Navua Town SO 7025 – Mataqali Nagasau, Viwa Island, Yasawa SO 7058 – Mataqali Nainasu, Viwa Island, Yasawa. SO 6988 – Mataqali Nalotawa, Viwa Island, Yasawa SO 9630 – Nabukavesi to Korovou Prison SO 7179 – Korolevu Viilage Nadroga to Telenaua Village Serua</p>



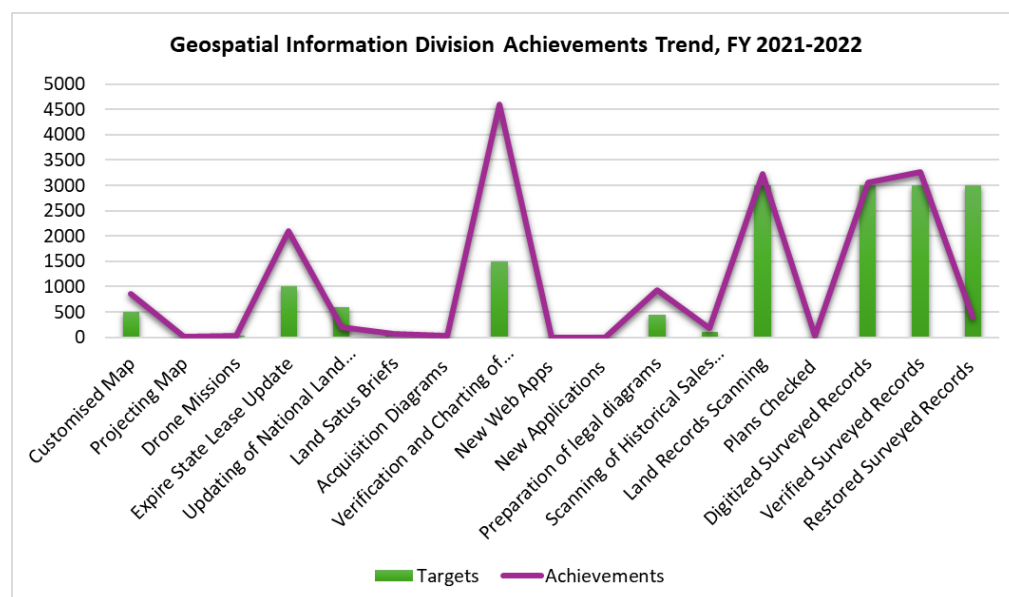
Challenges and Way Forward	Challenges and way forward are tabulated below:		
	No.	Challenges	Way Forward
	1	Approval of Scheme Plan- Pending with DTCP & ITLTB	The need for intervention on the approval of scheme plan at DTCP and ITLTB
	2	Staff Capacity	Qualified staff are not prioritizing doing project
	3	Complexity of the projects e.g. Datum Project	Collaboration with development partners
Valuation Division			
Achievements	Table 3: <u>Valuation Division Achievements for the FY 2021-22</u>		
	No.	Strategies for Implementation	Achievements
	1	Rating Valuation for Municipal Councils.	<u>Achieved</u> : 5064 Nausori – 4430 Savusavu - 634
	2	Undertake Roll Maintenance valuation for local authorities under the Local Government Act 1972	<u>Achieved</u> – 203 LD 56/43-12 Suva City – 18 lots LD 56/8-5 Nadi Town – 36 lots LD 56/17-4 Labasa Town – 24 lots LD 56/65-3 Nasinu Town – 124 lots LD 56/66 Rakiraki Town – 1 lot
	3	Collation of property sales data	Achieved – 897
	4	Production of monthly property sales.	Achieved - 186
	5	Production of Property Market Report	Target & Achieve: 8 Monthly Trend Reports One (1) 20 Year Property Market Trend Report
	6	Production of Periodical Reports	Target & Achieve: 52 Weekly Reports 12 Monthly Reports 6 SMB Updates 12 Monitoring Reports 6 Dashboard Updates 1 Annual Report 1 Annual Business Plan
	7	Target & Achieve: 52 Weekly Reports 12 Monthly Reports 6 SMB Updates 12 Monitoring Reports 6 Dashboard Updates 1 Annual Report 1 Annual Business Plan.	Achieved: 2,963 CE: 886 W: 1765 N: 312



		8	Undertake and submit valuation requests for issue of new leases	Achieved: 578 CE: 153 W: 362 N: 63																																																
		9	Assessment of penal rent for breach of lease conditions completed	Achieved: 96 – (on request basis only) CE: 50 W: 43 N: 3																																																
		10	Rental valuation for Government quarters completed	Achieved: 42 CE: 32 W: 8 N: 2																																																
		11	Inspection on Estate: Transfer; Subdivision; Rezoning; New applications; Renewal & expired; Leases; Mortgage; Tenancy; Agreement; Water & FEA Connection; Re-entry; Gravel Extraction;	Achieved: 2,425 CE: 1136 W: 894 N: 395																																																
Challenges and Way Forward	Challenges and Way Forward are tabulated below: <table><tr><td>No.</td><td>Challenges</td><td>Way Forward</td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>Capacity building for valuers and registration</td><td>Staff capacity building through continuous professional development Prioritize and encourage valuers to be registered</td></tr></table>				No.	Challenges	Way Forward	1	Capacity building for valuers and registration	Staff capacity building through continuous professional development Prioritize and encourage valuers to be registered																																										
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Digitized Surveyed Records	3000	3049
Verified Surveyed Records	3000	3273
Restored Surveyed Records	3000	402

Graph 1: Geospatial Achievements Trend, FY 2021-22



Discussion

The graph depicts the **Geospatial Information Division Achievements Trend for FY 2021-2022**, comparing **Targets** (green bars) and **Achievements** (purple line) across various tasks and projects. In summary, some GIM outputs exceeded targets, while others either met or fell short of them.

New Initiatives

1. **MyLeaseInfo:**

- The **COVID-19 pandemic** made it difficult for lessees to access services at the Lands Department's offices.
- To address this, the Department launched **MyLeaseInfo**, an online platform that allows lessees to:
 - View their **lease details**.
 - Monitor their last **eight financial transactions**.
 - **View and print statement invoices** instantly.
 - **Track consent applications** without needing to visit the office.

1. Future plans include **digitizing the State Lands Administration processes** to further improve services, along with a review of Standard Operation Processes with the Lands Administration Division.

2. **Country Action Plan for National Geospatial Information:**

- The Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources emphasized the importance of the **Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF)** as a tool for guiding **sustainable development** and **evidence-based policy**.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A national stakeholder consultation workshop was held on June 14 to discuss and finalize Fiji's Country Action Plan, supported by the Fiji Geospatial Information Management Council (FGIMC) and UNGGIM.																																												
Land Use Division																																													
Achievements	<p>Table 5: <u>Land Use Division Achievements for the FY 2021-22</u></p> <table><tr><th>Strategies</th><th>Targets</th><th>Achievements</th><th>Success Rate (%)</th></tr><tr><td>Enhancement of LUD administration and Monitoring</td><td>384</td><td>464</td><td>121%</td></tr><tr><td>Execution of leases and conveyancing</td><td>31</td><td>22</td><td>71%</td></tr><tr><td>Consultation/Awareness and Public Relations</td><td>206</td><td>226</td><td>110%</td></tr><tr><td>Identification of viable iTaukei Land for designation projections</td><td>500acres</td><td>890acres</td><td>178%</td></tr><tr><td>Number of land parcels designated</td><td>4</td><td>3</td><td>75%</td></tr><tr><td>Number of land parcels surveyed and surveyed plans approved</td><td>9</td><td>5</td><td>56%</td></tr><tr><td>Valuation carried out, Valuation re-assessment and Valuation statistical information data updates.</td><td>321</td><td>841</td><td>262%</td></tr><tr><td>Marketing Activities</td><td>113</td><td>288</td><td>255%</td></tr><tr><td>Number of designated land developed</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>100%</td></tr><tr><td>Designated iTaukei Land Developed and Monitored</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>100%</td></tr></table>	Strategies	Targets	Achievements	Success Rate (%)	Enhancement of LUD administration and Monitoring	384	464	121%	Execution of leases and conveyancing	31	22	71%	Consultation/Awareness and Public Relations	206	226	110%	Identification of viable iTaukei Land for designation projections	500acres	890acres	178%	Number of land parcels designated	4	3	75%	Number of land parcels surveyed and surveyed plans approved	9	5	56%	Valuation carried out, Valuation re-assessment and Valuation statistical information data updates.	321	841	262%	Marketing Activities	113	288	255%	Number of designated land developed	1	1	100%	Designated iTaukei Land Developed and Monitored	1	1	100%
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4.	Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Re-strategize processes on raw data collection after field work (Central Data Hub)																																											
5.	Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Introduction of Jot form LUD Online Application Forms																																											
6.	Principal Land Use Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Introduction of Land Use Division COP & BP Monitoring MatrixCollation of all backlogs of Financial Statements in collaboration with the Lands Admin/Execution team																																											
Challenges and Way Forward	Note that a total of 14 challenges concerning the Land Use Division are outlined on pages 35 and 36 of the MLMR 2021-22 Annual Report.																																												
Minerals Resources Department																																													
Mines and Environment Division																																													



Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Mines Inspection – 11 ii. Quarries Inspections – 101 iii. Applications for Exploration Licenses – 5 iv. Mineral Explorations – 34 v. EIA Screening Application & EIA Review – vi. Special Prospecting Licenses – 35 																
	Geological Services Division																
Achievements	<p>Summary of Achievements (2021-2022):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mineral Resource Core Shed Database Initiative: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Launched a long-term plan to develop and operationalize a database for the Mineral Resource Department (MRD) Core Shed. o The goal is to create a comprehensive database of historical and current data for clients interested in Fiji's mineral and mining sector, presented as Idle Prospect Packages. 2. Capacity Building: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Technical Officer Epineri Vula participated in the UNESCO-IGCP: Stone for Development Programme, focusing on capacity-building opportunities, particularly for early-career and female scientists. 3. Form 7 Template Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o A new Form 7 template was created for companies to report data to MRD, pending review by the Mines and Quarry Council. 4. Geobank Software Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Geobank Software Training was completed by the end of 2022. 5. MRD Core Repository: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Work began on operationalizing the MRD Core Repository. 6. Ongoing Reporting Assessments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Continued assessment of annual, quarterly, and monthly reports from mining and exploration companies. 																
	Geological Survey Division																
Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Land Acquisition – 122 ii. Other Land Acquisition – 173 iii. Maintenance of Valuation Roll - 203 Lots iv. Special Valuation – 6 v. Administration of iTaukei Leases to State – 102 vi. Rental Reassessment – 2963 																
	Geoscience Division																
Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Mineral Investigation Project (Compile GIS Data) - 13 Years ii. Digitization of geological map sheets - 3 Marine Island iii. Relocation programs - 4 locations iv. Seamless Mapping Project (Reconciling geological map sheets) - 7 locations v. Geological Hazard Assessment - 26 landslide recorded vi. Potential Hard Rock Resources - 19 sites 																
Financial	<p>Statement of Receipts and Expenditure for the Financial Year Ended 31 July 2022</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th><th>2021</th><th>2022</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Total Revenue</td><td>16,576,800</td><td>20,589,490</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total Operating Expenditure</td><td>15,486,477</td><td>18,672,711</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total Capital Expenditure</td><td>3,298,729</td><td>2,993,073</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total Expenditure</td><td>19,534,508</td><td>22,603,094</td></tr> </tbody> </table>			2021	2022	Total Revenue	16,576,800	20,589,490	Total Operating Expenditure	15,486,477	18,672,711	Total Capital Expenditure	3,298,729	2,993,073	Total Expenditure	19,534,508	22,603,094
	2021	2022															
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Total Capital Expenditure	3,298,729	2,993,073															
Total Expenditure	19,534,508	22,603,094															



Gender Analysis	No Gender information outlined in the MLMR 2021-2022 Annual Report.
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3.0 Sources

- Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources 2021-2022 Annual Report, Accessed on 18 October 2024:
<https://www.parliament.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/46-Ministry-of-Lands-and-Mineral-Resources-Annual-Report-2021%E2%80%932022.pdf>
- Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources Online Website, Accessed on 18 October 2024:
<https://www.lands.gov.fj/index.php>

23 October 2024

Disclaimer

This Annual Report Summary was prepared to assist the Standing Committee on **Natural Resources** in its review of the **Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources 2021-2022** 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



Annual Report Summary – Standing Committee on Natural Resources

Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources 2022-2023 Annual Report

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 some of the key issues in the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources Annual Reports (“AR”) for the financial year 2022-2023. The summary is designed to assist Members of Committee undertake their analysis of the Ministry’s performance as discussed in the Annual Report. The narrative provided here is only intended to assist the Committee with its appraisal of the reports and does not aim to provide in-depth oversight on the Ministry’s performance.

2.0 Review of the Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources 2022-2023 Annual Report

Activities	Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources 2022-2023 Summary
Vision	Lands and Minerals for Life.
Mission	To effectively administer and regulate the land and mineral sector through sustainable and transformative legislations and policies.
Values	In addition to the Civil Service Values contained in the Public Service Act 1999, the Ministry aspires to achieve the following values: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Honesty & Integrity ▪ Responsiveness ▪ Commitment ▪ Inclusivity ▪ Transparency & Accountability
Ministry’s Background	The Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources in Fiji oversees state lands, mineral resources, and groundwater through two main departments: the Department for Lands and Surveys and the Department of Mineral Resources. These departments carry out programs that promote development, environmental sustainability, and social equity. The report provides an overview of how these resources were managed and the financial aspects of related projects and activities during the 2022/2023 financial year.
2022-2023 Key Achievements	
Lands Division	
The data shows a generally strong performance by the Ministry of Lands in its administrative functions, with most targets exceeded. Breakdowns are as follows:	
Overachieved Areas	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Registration of Land Tenure: Achieved 978 against a target of 800 — a 22% overachievement. This suggests high efficiency and possibly increased demand or improved processes. 2. Ministerial Consent: Exceeded the target (73 vs. 60), showing responsive decision-making on lease-related matters. 3. Licenses Offered: Achieved 31 vs. 20 targeted — more licenses were issued than anticipated, possibly reflecting more applications or quicker approvals. 4. Various Consents (Transfers, Mortgages, etc.): Significantly exceeded expectations (1,606 vs. 1,190), indicating high levels of land-use activity and efficient processing. 5. Climate Change Adaptation Awareness (Foreshore Public Consultations): Held 25 sessions vs. 20 targeted, showing good outreach on environmental matters. 	

Underachieved Areas

1. **Advertisement and Allocation of Lots:** Only 29 lots advertised and allocated against a target of 60 — underperformance here may point to delays in lot preparation, policy gaps, or low demand.
2. **Transmission of State Schedule A & B Land:** Achieved 56 out of 80 — indicates possible legal, administrative, or coordination challenges.

Conclusion

The Ministry has demonstrated strong performance in administrative outputs related to land tenure and consents, indicating operational efficiency and responsiveness to stakeholder needs. However, land allocation and transmission of Schedule A & B lands remain bottlenecks. These areas require targeted interventions such as process reviews, stakeholder engagement, or policy updates to improve performance.

Table 1: *Key Achievements of the Lands Division: 2022–2023 Financial Year Statistics*

LANDS ADMINISTRATION ACHIEVEMENTS AS OF 31ST JULY 2023		
ASSIGNED ACTIVITIES	TARGET	ACHIEVED
Registration of Land Tenure	800	978
Ministerial Consent	60	73
License Offered	20	31
Consent to Transfer, Mortgage, Subletting, Caveat, Subdivision, Build, Legal Proceedings, Evict, Connect Water Meter, Connect Electricity, Rezoning – Target	1190	1606
Awareness for Climate Change Adaptation through Public Consultations on Foreshore Developments (Waiver of Fishing Rights)	20	25
Advertisement of available lots and its allocation	60	29
Transmission of State Schedule A & B Land	80	56

Survey Division

The Survey Division recorded **outstanding performance** for the 2022–2023 financial year, with **all operational targets exceeded** — except for in-service training.

Category	Key Highlights
<u>Recording & Dispatching</u>	All targets exceeded — including new plans (1,220 vs. 548) and re-submissions (1,412 vs. 463).
<u>Plan Assessments</u>	Surpassed targets for both new (863 vs. 528) and re-submitted plans (1,341 vs. 1,056).
<u>Field Checks</u>	Slightly over target (5 vs. 4 for Unit Titles; 13 vs. 12 for Survey Plans).
<u>Plan Approval Process</u>	Every stage (preparation, verification, dispatch) exceeded 300 targets by over 60%.
<u>Amendments of Survey Plans</u>	Far exceeded (50 completed vs. 4 targeted).
<u>In-service Training</u>	Not achieved (0 vs. 2 planned sessions).
<u>Revenue Collection</u>	\$173,943.88 collected from survey plans and map sales.

Table 2: Key Achievements of the Survey Division: 2022–2023 Financial Year Statistics

SURVEY DIVISION ACHIEVEMENTS AS OF 31ST JULY 2023			
SPECIFIC AGENCY OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION	TARGET	ACHIEVED
Recording & dispatching of survey plans	New Survey plans received	548	1220
	Re-submitted plans	463	1412
	Requisition	528	1423
	Town & Country Planning	300	833
	Approved Plans	300	863
Assessment of survey plans	Assessment of new survey plans	528	863
	Assessment of re-submitted plans	1056	1341
Field checks	Unit Title Plan & Strata Lease Plans	4	5
	Survey Plans (SO/DP)	12	13
Approval of survey plans	Process & preparation for approval of plans	300	489
	Verification of survey plans	300	489
	Dispatch of approved survey plans	300	489
Amendments of approved survey plans	Amend approved survey plan	4	50
Inservice training	FPSSDE	2	0
Revenue collectors for lodging Survey plans & map sales	Receiving and recording of all revenues	As and when required	\$173,943.88

Survey Plans Approved for the Financial Year 2022-2023

Please refer to **page 14** of the Annual Report.

Valuation Division

Summary key achievements of the Valuation Division please refer to **page 17 – 20** of the Annual Report.

Geospatial Information Management (GIM)

Table 3: Key Achievements of the GIM Division: 2022–2023 Financial Year Statistics



GIM ACHIEVEMENTS AS OF 31ST JULY 2023		
GIM OUTPUTS	TARGETS	ACHIEVEMENTS
Customized Map	500	681
Projecting Mapping	6	9
Drone Missions	15	26
Updating of National Land Register	2000	5413
Land Status Briefs	50	73
Acquisition Diagrams	25	15
Verification and Charting of approved Survey Plans	8400	11625
Fiji Geospatial Information Data updates	8	8
New Web Apps	2	2
New applications	1	1
Preparation of legal diagrams	450	1102
Scanning of historical sales reports	100	102
Land records scanning	3000	3002
Revenue - Sales of Maps	\$75,000	\$174,807.53
System Support services	1320	1520

Land Use Division (LUD)

Table 4: Key Achievements of the LUD Division: 2022–2023 Financial Year Statistics

LAND USE DIVISION ACHIEVEMENTS AS OF 31ST JULY 2023		
PLANNED ACTIVITIES	TARGETS	ACHIEVEMENTS
Administration and monitoring	384	242
Execution of leases and conveyancing	31	83
Consultation/ Awareness and Public Relations	206	215
Identification of viable native and state land for designations (ha)	1000	1013
Land parcels designated	4	0
Land parcels surveyed.	4	7
Valuation, re-assessment and statistical information data updates.	347	388
Marketing Activities	147	227
Number of designated Land Developed (CAPEX) Legalega	1	1

7 LEASES ACHIEVED | (2) Wailekutu, Central Eastern; (3) Vunivesi, Dawasamu; (1) Mali, Macuata; (1) Ravitaki, Kadavu

2022 LANDOWNERS LEASE MONIES DISTRIBUTED | \$757,410.69

2023 LANDOWNERS LEASE MONIES DISTRIBUTED | \$1,182,220.00

NOTE: Lease monies distributed to LOU's of the LUD are reported following the calendar years of 2022 & 2023

Mines & Environment Division (MED)

For further information: siteri.gaunalomani@legislature.gov.fj / siteri.gaunalomani@parliament.gov.fj

Table 5: Key Achievements of the MED Division: 2022–2023 Financial Year Statistics

TENEMENT ADMINISTRATION	
New Applications	2
SPLs Granted	2
SPLs Renewed	0
PRs Issued	35
SPLs to-date	35
SMLs to-date	7
SSRs to-date	4

28th SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY (ISA) | MLMR PS Dr. Taga and Act. DMD Mr. Mohammed represented Fiji at ISA for the 12 day meeting held in Jamaica.

RESOURCE GEOLOGY UNIT | Geobank Software Training and Installation Completed

ENVIRONMENT UNIT | Environment Management Monitoring Checklist formulated for monitoring and reporting from Mineral Exploration companies.
Officer from the Unit researchers from Akita University, Japan.

ENVIRONMENT UNIT		INSPECTORATE UNIT	
Mines	16	Mine Inspections	10
Quarries	99	Nasomo Month end inspection	1
Tenement	13	Quarries Inspection	110
Community Consultation	11	Explosive Magazine Inspection	21
Form Assessment	62	Diwali Store Inspection	2342
EIA Screening Application	5		
EIA/EMP Review	8		

Geospatial Services Division

- Total Groundwater Reconnaissance Assessment undertaken – **32 locations**
- Total Groundwater Investigation undertaken – **23 locations**
- Total Groundwater Drilling undertaken – **16 locations**
- Total Groundwater Reticulations undertaken – **12 locations**
- Commissioned Bored for 2022-2023 (*Refer to table 6 below*)

Table 6: *Commissioned Bores for 2022-2023*

COMMISSIONED BORES FOR 2022-2023				
NO.	LOCATION	DISTRICT/PROV.	BENEFICIARIES	
			HOUSEHOLD	POPULATION
1	Nabukelevu-I-Ra	Nabukelevu, Kadavu	90	300
2	Namata Primary School	Wai, Nadroga	9	73
3	Savusavu-Lailai Settlement	Wai, Nadroga	22	140
4	Qelemumumu Village & Raranikawai Settlement	Labasa, Macuata	59	458
5	Vunisavisavi Village	Cakaudrove	22	80
6	Karoko Village	Tunuloa, Cakaudrove	90	310

During the fiscal year 2022-2023, a total of 661 local events and 1061 regional events were detected and recorded in the Unit database while 842 releases were issued where 355 released were sent to the media and 437 sent internally.

Policy & Quality Assurance Division

NEW INITIATIVES

POLICY & REPORTING

- Endorsement and monitoring of Policy/Cabinet papers Execution Matrix.
- On-going update and circulation for analysis.

MEDIA

- Development of viber channel
- Short videos for talkback show's
- Endorsement of the Media Strategy
- Creation of the Ministry's YouTube page

QUALITY ASSURANCE

- QA activities- Devising of new forms as identified in the QA activities.
- COVID 19 Contribution – Participated in the MOH COVID-19 management and awareness exercise

Statement of Receipt and Expenditure for the year ended 31 July 2023



**STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2023**

	Note	2023 (\$)	2022 (\$)
REVENUE			
State Revenue			
Land and Property Rent		16,410,419	16,727,941
Fees Charges, Fines and Penalties	3(a)	789,116	1,655,858
Revenue from Surveys & Sales of Navigation	3(b)	109,625	510,334
Licence		25,865	24,987
Sale of Publications		258	4,482
Sale of Photographs		18	120
Mining Fees	3(c)	61,959	129,631
Chemical		-	-
Commission		5,989	2,218
Valuation Fees		232	12,222
Total State Revenue		17,403,481	19,067,793
Agency Revenue			
Miscellaneous	3(d)	5,685,414	1,521,697
Total Revenue		23,088,895	20,589,490
Expenditure			
Established Staffs		9,922,331	8,979,290
Government wage earners		824,877	820,383
Travel and Communications	3(e)	431,766	371,491
Maintenance & Operations	3(f)	5,660,576	7,263,646
Purchase of Goods and Services	3(g)	632,300	531,930
Operating Grants and Transfers		27,915	32,100
Special Expenditures		726,172	673,871
Total Operating Expenditure		18,225,937	18,672,711
Capital Construction	3(h)	3,156,934	2,745,852
Capital Purchase	3(i)	510,041	64,211
Capital grants and transfers	3(j)	313,595	183,010
Total Capital Expenditure		3,980,570	2,993,073
Value Added Tax		917,300	937,310
Total Expenditure		23,123,807	22,603,094

3.0 Sources

1. Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources 2022-2023 Annual Report: [MLMR 2022 2023 Annual Report Book.pdf](#).

27 May 2025

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Appendix 4

Photos









