



STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE, LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Review Report on the 2022 General Election Joint Report by the Electoral Commission and Supervisor of Election



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
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ACRONYMS

1.	CSO	Civil Society Organisation
2.	CEA	Community Election Advocate
3.	FEO	Fijian Elections Office
4.	FLRC	Fiji Law Reform Commission
5.	GE	General Elections
6.	MOG	Multi-National Observer Group
7.	NRV	National Register of Voters

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD	4
COMMITTEE REMIT AND MEMBERS	6
COMMITTEE SECRETARIAT	7
1.0 INTRODUCTION	8
1.1 Procedure and Programme	8
1.2 Electoral Commission and Fijian Elections Office	8
2.0 DELIBERATION AND FINDINGS BY THE COMMITTEE	9
2.1 Deliberation by the Committee	9
2.2 Clarification provided by the Electoral Commission and Fijian Elections Office	10
2.3 Sustainable Development Goals impact analysis	35
2.4 Key Findings	35
3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS	37
4.0 CONCLUSION	37

CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD



The Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights was referred the *2022 General Election Joint Report* by the Electoral Commission and Supervisor of Elections and the Committee was mandated to review the Joint Report and table its findings back to Parliament.

The 2022 General Election report compiled by the Electoral Commission and Supervisor of Election was mandated by section 14(g) of the Electoral Act

“All activities conducted by the Fijian Elections Office must be conducted in a transparent manner including - in the year in which a general election is held, the Electoral Commission and the Supervisor of Elections must submit a joint post-election report, within 6 months after the date of election, to the President and Parliament concerning the conduct of election”.

The Committee identified pertinent issues from the Report and sent correspondences regarding these to the Electoral Commission and the Fijian Elections Office, for clarification.

As a result of the review, the Committee identified a few key findings, which are provided as follows:

1. That the 20 recommendations by MOG and the additional recommendations made by the EC and FEO have been reviewed and refined by the EC and FEO and subsequently submitted to the Fiji Law Reform Commission as part of its proposed changes to the Electoral Laws.
2. That the EC and FEO held workshop with political parties that also formed recommendation for amendments to the electoral laws.
3. That the Fiji Law Reform Commission has subsequently reviewed all recommendations made by the FEO and EC and that the outcome of this changes will be presented to Parliament.
4. That Constitutional amendments are required to address some recommendations provided by the MOG.
5. That there are concerns regarding the declaration document published by the Fijian Elections Office (FEO) that it which could potentially be weaponized by a political party that wins an election.
6. That there is a suggestion to remove ceiling cap for political party donation which could infringe the independence of the party that wins an election.
7. That there is suggestion for having gender quota on political party candidate lists to encourage participation of women in elections.

8. That there is a need to have advanced public disclosure of election dates to allow sufficient preparation by voters and stakeholders.
9. That EC has decided to discontinue the mobile election results app and reinstate the media centre for election result counting.
10. That all references to MIDA will be removed from the electoral laws.

At the conclusion of its review, the Committee resolved that it would be appropriate to put forth recommendations for consideration by the Electoral Commission. A summary of these is as follows;

1. That the Standing Committee will review any proposed changes to Electoral Laws that are proposed by the FLRC once their report is tabled in Parliament.
2. That safeguards be implemented to protect those donors listed in the declaration document published by the FEO which could be weaponized by the winning party.
3. That there be an early date allocated for public disclosure of election dates to allow sufficient preparation time for voters and stakeholders.
4. Given the repeal of the MIDA Act, it is recommended that there be a suitable replacement framework to be considered by FEO to ensure continued media accountability, transparency, and fair access during elections.

I acknowledge the Honourable Members of the Justice, Law and Human Rights Committee, for their deliberations and input and the alternate member(s) who made themselves available when the substantive members could not attend. Appreciation is also extended to the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission and the Fijian Elections Office who accepted the Committee's invitation to make a submission in person, which assisted the Committee in its work.



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HON. RATU RAKUITA VAKALALABURE
Chairperson

COMMITTEE REMIT AND MEMBERS

The Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights (‘Committee’) is established under Section 70 of the *Constitution of the Republic of Fiji* and Standing Order 109 of the *Standing Orders of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji*. The Committee consists of the following Members:



Hon. Ratu Rakuira
Vakalalabure
(Chairperson)



Hon. Faiyaz Koya
(Deputy Chairperson)



Hon. Jone Usamate
(Member)



Hon. Sachida Nand
(Member)



Hon. Ratu Isikeli
Tuiwailevu
(Member)



Hon. Ratu Josaia
Niudamu
(Member)

COMMITTEE SECRETARIAT

Staff

- Mr. Jackson Cakacaka – Senior Committee Clerk
- Ms. Alumita Cabealawa– Deputy Committee Clerk
- Ms. Katie Batikawai – Assistant Committee Clerk

Committee contact details

Address: Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights
Parliament of the Republic of Fiji
Parliament Complex
Government Buildings
SUVA, FIJI

Phone: +679 322 5600/ +679 8925 221

Web: <https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-justice-law-human-rights/>

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In accordance to Standing Order 38(2), the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights was referred the *2022 General Elections Joint Report by the Electoral Commission and Supervisor of Elections* on 24 November 2023.

The Committee was mandated to review the Report in the parameters provided under Standing Order 110(c) and table its finding(s) back to Parliament as pursuant to Standing Order 39 and 34(1)(g).

1.1 Procedure and Programme

The Committee began its review of the Report on 25 August 2025. The review process adopted by the Committee was agreed upon through consensus by the Members and a summary of this is as follows;

- The Committee read through the Report and had discussions on matters that were raised by individual Members. The Committee identified issues that needed clarification and further discussions.
- These issues were brought to the attention of the EC and FEO on 13 October 2025 through a formal letter that included questions on the Report. Clarifications were received from the FEO on 17 October 2025, and these were then deliberated on by the Committee.
- Following the review of the written clarifications, the Committee then invited the Electoral Commission for a face-to-face meeting on 20 October 2025 for further discussion.

At the conclusion of the review, the Committee formulated findings and recommendations for Parliament to consider.

1.2 Electoral Commission and Fijian Elections Office

The Electoral Commission (“**Commission**”) is established by Section 75 of the *Constitution of the Republic of Fiji (2013)* (hereinafter also referred to as the “**Constitution**”) and its responsibilities are stated in Section 75(2), (3) and (4).

The Commission is mandated to formulate policy and to oversee the conduct of elections in accordance with the Electoral Act and any other related law, including responsibility and authority with respect to the following matters—

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- (a) registration of voters;
- (b) registration of political parties;

- (c) *determination of the number of members of Parliament in accordance with section 54(2) of the Constitution;*
- (d) *receipt and return of the writ for an election;*
- (e) *declaration of the election results and allocation of seats in Parliament;*
- (f) *adjudication of electoral disputes, including disputes relating to or arising from the right to be nominated as a candidate, but excluding petitions and disputes subsequent to the declaration of election results;*
- (g) *monitoring and enforcing compliance with this Decree and any law governing political parties, on its own initiative or in response to a formal complaint; and*
- (h) *adopting Rules and instructions consistent with this Decree and the Constitution that are necessary for the transparent and orderly conduct of free and fair elections.¹*

The Fijian Elections Office (FEO) is an independent office in accordance with section 9 of the Electoral Act whereby the SoE is the head of the FEO. The SoE is responsible for the recruitment and hiring staff to ensure that the FEO can perform its responsibility in accordance with the law.

Additionally, both offices are mandated under section 14(g) of the Electoral Act 2014 to provide a joint post-election report, within 6 months after the date of the election, to the President and Parliament concerning the conduct of the General Election.

2.0 DELIBERATION AND FINDINGS BY THE COMMITTEE

2.1 Deliberation by the Committee

The Committee identified the following as issues that needed further clarification from the Commission;

- The status of the MOG and the EC recommendations following the general elections.
- Clarification on the Commissions budget allocation for the years reported.
- The Committee queried whether the funding provided by UNDP was an addition to the budget allocated for the reported year and the total amount provided to the Commission.

¹ Constitution

2.2 Clarification provided by the Electoral Commission and Fijian Elections Office

The MOG had made recommendations for electoral improvement, and these were addressed by the EC and the FEO. A summary of the clarifications received, and actions taken by the EC on these issues is provided below.

MOG Recommendations	EC and FEO current stance on the MOG recommendations	Further comments for action by EC and FEO
Recommendation 1		
Review restrictions on election-related activities for domestic and traditional Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), particularly in relation to candidate development activities, which will result in wider participation in the electoral system by all sectors of society, including women (reference 1.0)	The FEO had submitted proposed amendments to the FLRC to address the MOG's recommendation and clarify the role of CSOs in electoral processes. (reference 1.1)	The Electoral Commission intends to develop a guideline for CSOs. (reference 1.2)
Recommendation 2		
Conduct an external audit of the National Voter Register to ensure accuracy and public confidence (page 17). (reference 2.0)	The FEO will continue its effort to secure an external audit provider. (reference 2.1)	FEO is still trying to identify a suitable auditor to undertake the audit of the NVR. (reference 2.2)
Recommendation 3		
Clarify the validity of voter cards and other allowable documents early ahead of next election to maximise voter turnout (page 18). (reference 3.0)	The FEO has taken proactive action to minimize voter confusion with regards to the validity of voter cards. (reference 3.1)	The FEO has visited the Fijian diaspora abroad to raise awareness about the necessary documents required for new registrations or card replacements. (reference 3.2)
Recommendation 4		
Consider the appropriateness of the severe criminal penalties in electoral legislation, including the Electoral Act 2014, and whether the desire to deter criminal conduct, ultimately	FEO advised that it had proposed changes to all offence provisions across the three electoral laws to streamline offences and align penalties. (reference 4.1)	FEO recommended that offences be classified into two categories; minor illegal electoral practices offences, corrupt electoral offences which are major offences that might require imprisonment or voter disqualification.

diminishes public confidence in the EC and FEO (aspirational recommendation, page 20). (reference 4.0)		(reference 4.1)
Recommendation 5		
Consider whether the length and detail of the Electoral Act 2014 affects the public's readability and understanding of the legal framework regarding elections, to the detriment of public confidence. Consistent with recommendations in 2018, the MOG also recommends relevant Fijian institutions work towards consolidating and simplifying relevant electoral legislation, including the Electoral Act 2014 (aspirational recommendation, page 20). (reference 5.0)	Consolidating these laws into a single statute was deemed unnecessary, as each served a distinct purpose. However, the FEO had also submitted proposals recommending further amendments to improve the readability and clarity of the electoral laws to the FLRC. (reference 5.1)	The EC advised that the current laws represent three different factors in the electoral cycle, and it is convenient to maintain the three legislations separately. This enables the FEO to ensure that all the provisions in these three different laws are actioned effectively and efficiently. (reference 5.2)
Recommendation 6		
Review the appropriateness of the Supervisor of Election's (SoE) powers, particularly in subsections 6(1A) - (1C) of the Electoral Act 2014 (page 23). (reference 6.0)	FEO acknowledged the recommendation and has submitted proposed amendments on the relevant sections to the FLRC for consideration. (reference 6.1)	The FEO is of the opinion that the SoE powers stipulated in section 6(1A) – (1C) is excessive. A submission was made to the FLRC to moderate the powers of the SoE to make it more consistent with the current practices with other election management bodies. (reference 6.2)
Recommendation 7		
Ensure best efforts are undertaken to use full parliamentary consultation processes when amending electoral legislation, including providing advice to relevant decision-makers regarding the appropriateness of using Standing Order 51 when passing amendments to election-related legislation	While the FEO and the EC do not hold a mandate over parliamentary procedures, both offices fully support the use of parliamentary consultation on legislative amendment processes. (reference 7.1)	The FEO highlighted the importance of utilizing the full parliamentary processes when amending electoral legislation, and to be in par with other international best practices. (reference 7.2)

(aspirational recommendation, page 23). (reference 7.0)		
Recommendation 8		
Review the appropriateness of section 115 of the Electoral Act 2014, especially when its effect on free political debate is considered cumulatively with the newly inserted subsections 110A and 144A (aspirational recommendation, page 28). (reference 8.0)	The FEO has made submissions to the FLRC proposing amendments to section 115 that address this issue. (reference 8.1)	FEO intends to work with CSO's in disseminating information to voters if proposed amendments are accepted by the FLRC. (reference 8.2)
Recommendation 9		
Develop guidelines for the conduct of Ministers, Members of Parliament and the civil service when the government is in 'caretaker mode' to reinforce public confidence in a level political playing field (aspirational recommendation, page 35). (reference 9.0)	FEO had submitted proposed amendments to section 115 to the FLRC. (reference 9.1)	The EC and FEO does not have any mandate or power to make decision on this recommendation. (reference 9.2)
Recommendation 10		
Require all political parties to report campaign expenditure and consider setting campaign expenditure limits (page 37). (reference 10.0)	FEO has proposed amendments to the FLRC concerning campaign expenditure limits under the <i>Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013</i> . (reference 10.1)	FEO had proposed that donation exceeding \$10,000 must be disclosed within 10 days. (reference 10.2)
Recommendation 11		
Consider providing technical support and potentially public funding for the costing of parties' political manifestos to ensure voters have reliable policy information (aspirational recommendation, page 38). (reference 11.0)	The election management bodies are required to remain politically neutral; it would be inappropriate for such support in relation to political party manifestos to be provided by Commission or the FEO. (reference 11.1)	No further discussion
Recommendation 12		
The MOG recommends that the EC and FEO strengthen efforts to build productive partnerships with civil society organisations	The FEO conducted a review of the 2022 General Election and sought feedback from stakeholders including CSO's which was taken	FEO will continue to engage with CSO on <i>community election advocate programme</i> to train the existing 450

during both the pre-election phase and following the issuance of the Writ, and to actively work with CSO's in voter awareness, information, and education activities. (page 41). (reference 12.0)	on board to improve planning for the next general election and for the improvement of FEO service delivery. (reference 12.1)	selected personnel to conduct election awareness in communities. (reference 12.2)
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Recommendation 13

Consider how domestic observers and other international non-governmental observers can be incorporated into future electoral processes (page 41). (reference 13.0)	Currently, section 119 of the Electoral Act 2014 clearly states that the Minister responsible for Elections may appoint or invite any person, organisation or entity to be observers for any elections. (reference 13.1)	FEO will continue to empower NGOs for National Observers in the next general elections. (reference 13.2)
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Recommendation 14

All stakeholders continue their efforts to promote women's representation and safeguard gender diversity in the electoral system, including as candidates; and that gender safeguards be integrated into any electoral system reforms (page 42). (reference 14.0)	The collaborative CEA initiative by the FEO and CSOs included FWRM, Femlink Pacific, and faith-based organizations, all of which advocated for women's representation. These groups nominated volunteers who were trained by the FEO as CEA advocates to share electoral information and raise awareness within their communities, particularly among the women they supported. (reference 14.1)	FEO proposed that 30% of the party list of candidates should be women. (reference 14.2)
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Recommendation 15

Continue the work of the Elections Disability Access Working Group (EDAWG) to develop better support services for voters with disabilities (page 43). (reference 15.0)	4-Year Workplan outlining a roadmap of activities (disability friendly) leading up to the next general election launched by EDAWG and FEO has been actively monitoring this Workplan to ensure all planned activities are successfully implemented. (reference 15.1)	FEO continues to consider recommendations put forth by EDAWG on improvements of electoral services. (reference 15.2)
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Recommendation 16

Review the Media Industry Development Authority of Fiji's (MIDA) mandate and	MIDA Act 2010 has been repealed under the Media Industry Development (Repeal) Act 2023	No further comments
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operations and relevant procedures to create greater certainty and clarity for media organisations (aspirational recommendation, page 46). (reference 16.0)	and consequently all provisions under the Electoral Act referring to MIDA has been deleted. Further, the Commission and the FEO are not in charge of the media regulatory framework and cannot make decisions regarding this. (reference 16.1)	
Recommendation 17		
Review the operation of media blackout requirement in the law and providing greater clarity through published guidelines (page 46). (reference 17.0)	The MIDA Act 2010 has been repealed under the Media Industry Development (Repeal) Act 2023 and consequently all provisions under the Electoral Act referring to MIDA has been deleted. (reference 17.1)	No further comments
Recommendation 18		
Review the appropriateness of the EC guidelines on the conduct of opinion polls and their effective constraint on the media's ability to contribute to public discourse and political accountability (page 46). (reference 18.0)	The FEO has recommended amendments to the FLRC. (reference 18.1)	No further comments
Recommendation 19		
Review the policies and methods of communication of important election information, including provisional and final results, and consider a simple analogue backup, such as a manual results tally board, to complement the digital FEO Results App with strengthened verification protocols (page 58). (reference 19.0)	FEO Results App will no longer be used to disseminate election results to the public and instead election results will be disseminated through the FEO website, social media platforms and media channels. (reference 19.1)	FEO intends to bring back the Media centre and replace the Results App.
Further Recommendation by the EC and SOE		
EC Institutional Continuity, Accountability and Effectiveness	FEO submit that the recommendation is solely a constitutional matter. FEO understands that constitutional review is outside of the mandate for the review of the national electoral legislation and therefore any	No further comments.

	revision to the terms of appointment of Commission members are solely matters for the government, the President and the Constitutional Offices Commission to initiate.	
Secretary to the EC	FEO have recommended to the FLRC the amendment of this provision under the Electoral Act 2014 in support of this recommendation.	No further comments.
Audit of FEO Systems	It was submitted that internal audits of FEO core systems remain ongoing in preparation for the next general election. With regards to the external audit of the National Register of Voters (NRV), we submit that plans are in place to ensure that the NRV is audited before the next general election.	No further comments.
Legal Framework	(a) <i>Maintaining Election Management Body Neutrality</i> FEO have made recommendations to the FLRC for the amendment of provisions in the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013 which directly supports this recommendation. (b) <i>Legislative Stability in Election Year</i> legislative authority is reserved to Parliament under Part A of Chapter 3 of the Constitution. Therefore, constitutional amendment would be the most appropriate way to achieve the aim in this recommendation. (c) <i>Early Disclosure of Election Date</i> FEO supports this proposal but understood constitutional review to be outside the mandate for the review of the national electoral legislation and therefore has not prepared any draft amendments to this effect. The adoption of a fixed national election may require	No further comments.

	constitutional amendment the decision of which rests with the government. (d) Enhancing Voter Participation via Access to Elected Representatives Fiji's current electoral system is stipulated under the Constitution and any decision regarding the revision or adoption of an alternative system are decisions for the Parliament and Government of the day to decide.	
Legal Framework: Further Recommendations of the EC	(a) Independent Registrar of Political Parties, and the Greater Public Disclosure (b) proposals have been made on amendments to the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act to the FLRC to ensure transparency of political party funding and expenditure. Further, the FEO has sought to address the potential for misuse of the position of the Registrar through substantive amendments recommended to FLRC such as removing excessive powers and clarifying the roles and functions of this position. (c) Enhancing Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the Electoral System The rights of persons to participate in voting are prescribed in section 55 of the Constitution, including that those who have been declared to be of unsound mind and not eligible (and this is mirrored in the Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act 2012). The FEO considers any change would require a review of the Constitution. The FEO acknowledges that not all polling	

	stations are easily accessible for some people with disabilities, however on average FEO requires 2,200 polling stations. These must be located throughout the country where there are concentrations of voters and are predominantly schools and village or community halls. The FEO is not able to modify all these state or publicly owned premises, and as the relevant authorities continue to enhance accessibility to their premises FEO and voters will benefit from the enhanced accessibility. FEO has revised the provisions in the Electoral Act 2014 to enhance the voting experience at the polling station for eligible voters living with disabilities.	
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Reference

1. Recommendation 1 - Electoral Reform

1.0 The MOG noted a drop in women candidates and elected representatives in 2022 compared to previous elections which has raised concerns about gender diversity in politics. While public campaigning was accessible, many groups were worried about new restrictions on activities like opinion polls and workshops which were suspected to be influenced by the ruling government to limit opposition efforts. The MOG acknowledged that there is no single solution that will quickly increase diversity in Parliament. However, providing and expanding opportunities for non-government stakeholders to engage in the electoral process is part of the solution. The MOG recommended that there be a review on the restriction of election-related activities for civil society organizations especially those focused on developing candidates to help increase participation across all parts of society, including women.

1.1 The Committee noted that the EC and the SOE agreed with the recommendation and further acknowledged that the restrictions on election-related activities are set out in the *Electoral Act 2014*. The FEO has submitted proposed amendments to the FLRC purposely to address the MOG's recommendation and to clarify the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in electoral activities.

1.2 Section 115 of the Electoral Act 2014 currently requires those who receive funds from foreign partners, to make an application to the FEO once the election date is announced. The FEO will then review this application and see whether they should be granted approval to conduct certain electoral activities, such as public forum or a poll. One of the proposed amendments submitted to the Fiji Law Reform Commission is that the Electoral Commission develop guidelines and then assist those who intend to be engaged in providing civic governance or election information. The FEO advised that this would be one avenue where it could work closely with the CSOs to ensure that the stakeholders, especially the public, receive consistent information about Elections.

2. External Audit on National Register of Voters

2.0 The MOG noted that the voter register has been maintained at a high standard of quality. The FEO has consistently updated voter details and taken steps to maintain its integrity, through regular cleansing. The MOG found the FEO's approach to updating the voter register robust and reliable, and commended its full control over the biometric technology used to maintain the register. It was noted that the EC had issued calls for tenders to audit the National Register of Voters in 2021 and August 2022, both locally and internationally, but had not been able to find suitable providers. The EC confirmed that auditing the register remains a priority and that it planned to publish a new expression of interest after the 2022 General Election. Based on this observation by MOG, it was recommended that the EC continue in its efforts to carry out an independent external audit, to maintain accuracy and public confidence.

- 2.1 In response to the recommendation by MOG, the Commission issued Expressions of Interest on four occasions (03/11/21, 20/11/21, 01/08/22, and 20/08/22) specifically seeking reputable local and international organisations to audit Fiji's National Register of Voters. However, no suitable bidders were found. On 09/09/22, the Commission resolved to re-advertise the Expression of Interest after the 2022 General Election given that the Writ could be issued at any time. Nevertheless, both the EC and FEO confirmed that they will continue their efforts to secure an external audit provider.
- 2.2 The FEO intends to have the external audit done way before the next election readiness timeline. The FEO confirmed that it has not yet submitted any recommendations to the Electoral Commission on the undertaking of the audit.

3. Recommendation 3 – Confusion of voting eligibility

- 3.0 The MOG were informed by some stakeholders that there had been confusion about voter ID requirements. Although over 90% of voters had switched to the new voter card, it was not strictly required for voting. The MOG observed that voters with old cards and even those without cards but who were listed on the voter roll, and who had been properly identified by the Presiding Officer, had been allowed to vote in accordance with regulations. The MOG recommended that the FEO offer early clarification on whether older voter cards or other valid ID documents could be used in the next General Election.
- 3.2 During preparations for the 2022 General Election, there was some mixed messaging from the FEO regarding the green and blue voter cards. Specifically, confusion arose around the documentation required to obtain these cards. This inconsistency led to uncertainty among voters, highlighting the need for clearer communication and streamlined guidance in future electoral processes.

One of the gaps identified by FEO was that participants in the PALM Scheme and New Zealand's RSE Scheme were departing Fiji without any knowledge of their electoral duties. These participants left with little to no understanding of their civic responsibilities. To address this, the FEO had secured a weekly slot for debrief sessions which targeted Fijians preparing to leave for either the PALM Scheme in Australia or the RSE Scheme in New Zealand.

In these sessions, FEO noted that the individuals departing through these schemes were unaware of the postal voting applications they needed to complete. Many assumed that simply being overseas would automatically qualify them to receive a postal ballot. The FEO had to guide these individuals through the correct process, including the voting methods available to them while abroad. There was also a need to update addresses, particularly for those departing on three- to four-year contracts. As part of the debrief sessions, these individuals were given the opportunity to update their voter cards before leaving Fiji.

FEO teams were deployed from the end of September through to November to deliver electoral services to members of the Fijian diaspora, serving in Australia, New Zealand, Tuvalu, American Samoa, Samoa, the Cook Islands, and the United States. This marked the first phase of the FEO outreach that was to ensure registration among overseas Fijians. The FEO also partnered with the Ministry of Immigration, a collaboration that proved convenient, particularly given that voter registration is a key requirement for members of the Fijian diaspora.

The first phase focused on registering members of the Fijian diaspora, updating their voter cards, and correcting their addresses. The second phase, scheduled for the first or second quarter of the following year, aimed to raise awareness about the postal voting methods available to them and the steps they needed to take. The third phase involved the actual facilitation of postal voting. Together, these efforts represented a significant step toward empowering the Fijian diaspora to participate in the electoral process.

The FEO has also launched the Community Engagement Advocate program on 14th October 2025. The FEO recognised that it had not effectively engaged well in the previous three General Elections with already well-established community groups across the nation. These community advocates were selected from influential groups such as women leaders, men's associations, and youth organisations.

These individuals were trained and empowered with knowledge of the electoral processes and were equipped with election-related information to enable them to conduct outreach and facilitate discussions within their respective communities.

The FEO had also developed a Year 10 curriculum aimed at engaging newly eligible voters in schools. This curriculum was designed to introduce students to the fundamentals of the electoral process, including the role of Members of Parliament and the structure of general elections. The FEO also provided a school election toolkit to help students gain practical insight into how elections are conducted, enabling a sense of participation and preparedness ahead of the upcoming general election.

The FEO had also participated in various festivals across the different Divisions, where electoral services and awareness activities were provided. These included the Hibiscus Festival and other festive events that had taken place throughout the year. This allowed FEO to engage directly with the public and promote understanding of the electoral process in an accessible and community-centred setting.

4. Recommendation 4 - Appropriateness of severe criminal penalties

4.0 The MOG observed that Fiji's electoral laws were complex and highly prescriptive, containing provisions that other common law countries would typically place in subsidiary legislation, such as regulations. It also noted that the maximum penalties for electoral and media offences were very high, despite the non-violent nature of these offences.

- 4.1 In response to the recommendation by MOG, the FEO advised that it had proposed changes to all offence provisions across the three electoral laws to streamline offences and align penalties. Classifying offences into two categories such as illegal electoral practice offences which are minor offences, or corrupt electoral practices which are the major or more serious offences that might require prison term or disqualification as a voter. These recommendations were submitted to the Fiji Law Reform Commission (FLRC) for review.

5. Recommendation 5 - Simplifying Electoral Laws

- 5.0 In line with the 2018 recommendations, the MOG also recommended that relevant Fijian institutions work towards consolidating and simplifying electoral legislation to improve public understanding of the legal framework governing elections. This could have included amending the *Electoral Act 2014* to incorporate the core principles of Fiji's electoral system while shifting more detailed provisions to subsidiary legislation.

- 5.1 In response to the recommendation by MOG, it was advised that the *Electoral Act* contained 60 sections, the *Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act* had 32 sections, and the *Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act* had 29 sections. Consolidating these laws into a single statute was deemed unnecessary, as each served a distinct purpose. The Electoral Act addressed election procedures, the Political Parties Act governed party registration and administration, and the Electoral Registration Act focused on voter registration and managing the National Register of Voters.

Instead of consolidating the laws, the Commission and the FEO had focused on clarifying specific provisions within each electoral statute. A total of 36 amendments had been made to the *Electoral (Amendment) Act 2021*, which commenced on 07 June 2021. Additionally, 11 amendments were made to the *Electoral (Registration of Voters) (Amendment) Act 2021*, and 13 amendments to the *Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) (Amendment) Act 2021*, both of which also commenced on the same date. Two amendments had been made to the *Electoral (Registration of Voters) (Amendment) (No.2) Act 2021*, which commenced on 06 October 2021 and five amendments were made to the *Electoral (Amendment) Act 2022*, which commenced on 02 September 2022. It was further noted that these amendments had enabled the EC and FEO to carry out more effective election operations and strengthened consistency across electoral laws, particularly in the definition of certain terms and processes.

- 5.2 The Committee was advised that the three electoral laws each represented a distinct component of the electoral cycle. Maintaining these laws as separate pieces of legislation was considered convenient, as it allowed for the effective and efficient implementation of all provisions within their respective domains. This structure ensured that each law fulfilled its intended function without overlap.

6. Recommendation 6 - Excessive powers of SoE

6.1 The MOG recommended a review of the SoE powers under subsections 6(1A)–(1C) of Fiji’s *Electoral Act 2014*. Concerns noted that these provisions might grant the SoE excessive authority that would undermine free political debate, either in practice or perception.

Subsection 6(1A) empowers the SoE to implement Electoral Commission decisions and manage daily operations of the Fijian Elections Office. 6(1B) requires the SoE to follow lawful directions from the Commission, while 6(1C) provides that the SoE’s decisions is final in terms of operational matters unless overturned by a court.

6.2 It was noted that the FEO has acknowledged the MOG recommendation regarding the Supervisor of Elections’ powers under subsections 6(1A) (1C) of the Electoral Act 2014. In response, the FEO have submitted proposed amendments on the relevant sections to the Fiji Law Reform Commission (FLRC) for consideration.

6.3 The FEO realised that the powers stipulated in this section is quite excessive. A submission was made to the FLRC to basically moderate the extent of these powers and make it more consistent with the current practices with other election management bodies.

7. Recommendation 7 - Involvement of CSO in consultation process

7.1 Civil society groups raised concerns that amendments to the Electoral Act 2014, passed under Standing Order 51 restricted their ability to participate in Fiji’s democratic process. It was viewed the provisions granting the SoE broad powers to demand information are too broad and intrusive.

The MOG acknowledged that the intent behind these amendments was to strengthen the SoE’s capacity to fulfill his duties under the Act. It was further submitted that consultation through parliamentary committee processes would have allowed civil society to voice their concerns and provided the Government with a platform to clarify the intent behind the amendment. Such engagement could have allowed for mutual understanding and helped ensure that the legislation was more tailored to its intended purpose.

In this regard, the MOG recommended that all relevant Fijian institutions make best efforts to utilize full parliamentary consultation processes when amending electoral legislation. This includes advising decision-makers on the appropriateness of using Standing Order 51, which allows legislation to be fast-tracked without extensive debate. The MOG highlighted that amendments to the electoral framework especially those with significant implications for voters should undergo appropriate consultation to ensure transparency and public input.

7.2 While the FEO and the EC do not hold a mandate over parliamentary procedures, both offices fully support the use of comprehensive parliamentary consultation and legislative amendment processes. In line with this, the review and reform of electoral laws were jointly undertaken by the FLRC and the Commission in 2025. The FEO and the EC actively contributed to this process by submitting proposed amendments

to the *Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act 2012*, the *Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013*, and the *Electoral Act 2014*.

7.3 The FEO recognized that many of the amendments made before the 2022 General Election were passed under Standing Order 51. However, the FEO highlighted the importance of having parliamentary processes to align with other international best practices.

7(b) Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption

In addition to the electoral management body, it was noted that the FICAC played a key role in upholding the integrity of Fiji's electoral framework. Under the Electoral Act 2014, which outlines various electoral offences, FICAC was mandated to investigate and prosecute any corrupt or illegal conduct related to elections.

During the 2022 campaign period, the Multinational Observer Group (MOG) noted that FICAC received 60 complaints. Of these, seven cases were prosecuted and closed, while 46 remained under investigation. The MOG commended FICAC as a professional institution that carried out its responsibilities in the public interest. In this regard, the MOG recommended that the EC develop and publicly share clear procedures to ensure due process when handling complaints against the SoE, political parties, and the FEO, in accordance with section 17 of the *Electoral Act 2014*.

In response, the EC plans to review its internal procedures at the start of 2026 to ensure that due process is upheld and that mechanisms are in place for handling complaints. This will be a key activity for us, and beginning in January next year, the Electoral Commission Fiji and the FEO will work closely together to ensure that all administrative policies and procedures are in place ahead of preparations for the general election.

8. Appropriateness of section 115 of the Electoral Act 2014

8.0 The MOG observed that political parties and candidates were able to use designated public spaces for campaigning. However, various non-government stakeholders expressed concerns that the recent amendments had contributed to a shrinking public space, limiting free and open debate on political and election-related issues.

The MOG further noted that alongside the introduction of Sections 110A and 144A, section 115 remained a concern for civil society, including universities involved in voter education and awareness. Section 115 governs civil society's role in elections. The provision prohibits any foreign-funded CSO from engaging in campaign activities such as debates, forums, meetings, interviews, or publications.

Furthermore, a review of section 115 was recommended in 2018, raising questions about whether the provision was the most suitable mechanism for managing civil society organisation's involvement in the electoral space. In response, the Electoral Commission reviewed the section and concluded that it should be retained, as it ensured compliance, accuracy, and consistency in voter awareness and education

programs conducted by CSOs after the election date was announced. The CSO Guidelines and Forms for the 2022 General Election were subsequently approved by the EC on 25 April 2022.

Given the concerns raised by civil society stakeholders, although the election-management body's role in preventing undue foreign influence in civic education was acknowledged, the MOG recommended that a review of subsections 115(2) and (3) would be prudent. This was especially relevant when considering their cumulative impact alongside the newly inserted sections 110A and 144A of the Electoral Act 2014.

8.1 In response, the FEO had submitted proposed amendments to section 115 to the FLRC. These proposals reflected recommendations from the MOG as well as input from civil society organisations, political parties, and other key stakeholders following the 2022 General Election.

8.2 Section 115 outlined provisions allowing CSOs to organise various events aimed at empowering voters. However, the section included a key restriction stated that such activities could only proceed with prior approval from the FEO. In previous General Elections, the FEO primarily focused on verifying documents and disseminating information on how to vote. Section 115 of the Electoral Act had similarly concentrated on procedural content specifically, the mechanics of voting. However, FEO later expanded its approach to include voter empowerment and education on the importance of participating in the electoral process.

As a result, FEO recommended that Section 115 to have rules and regulations, including clear guidelines to be approved by the Electoral Commission. The FEO will be able to work closely with CSOs if proposed amendments are adopted by the FLRC, to ensure that electoral information that are disseminated to voters are effective and consistent at the same time. (verbatim page 2, 5 and 12).

9. Recommendation 9 - Develop guideline of conduct for Office holders

9.0 The MOG observed an absence of laws, regulations, or conventions typically found in other democracies to guide the conduct of the Government, Members of Parliament, and the civil service during the electoral process. It also noted that, throughout the campaign period, Government Ministers engaged in high-profile activities, including the distribution of government grants and funds, and the appointment of 13 Permanent Secretaries to various Ministries and Commissions on 18 November 2022.

It was noted that administering projects, dispensing grants, opening buildings, and appointing government officials were part of routine government business. However, if such activities continued during an election campaign, they could confer an 'incumbency advantage' that might influence voters. Moreover, making major policy decisions, new appointments, or entering significant contracts or undertakings during this period could constrain a future government's ability to govern freely.

Therefore, these activities should not have occurred during the caretaker period, once an election had been called.

The Government of Fiji adopted a recommendation from the 2018 MOG report to clarify the start and end of the campaign period. The adoption was to ensure stakeholders understood their rights and obligations during this time. The FEO subsequently announced that the campaign period would commence on 26 April 2022 and conclude 48 hours before Election Day. While this announcement provided clarity on when campaign rules under the Electoral Act 2014 would apply, the absence of a fixed election date continued to obscure when the caretaker period would officially begin.

- 9.1 In response, the EC and FEO did not have the mandate or authority to make decisions concerning the conduct of Ministers, Members of Parliament, or the civil service during the government's caretaker period. Such matters fell within the purview of Parliament and Cabinet. However, it was acknowledged that international democratic good practice supports the establishment of clear guidelines for conduct during the caretaker period to help maintain public confidence in the electoral process.

10. Recommendation 10 - Campaign expenditure

- 10.1 The MOG observed a significant disparity between regulations on campaign financing and regulations on campaign expenditure.

Some political parties stated that the extended official campaign period and the absence of a fixed election date created difficulties in planning campaign expenditure. For instance, opposition parties struggled to book advertising space efficiently after candidate numbers were assigned. It was further stated that reporting requirements campaign expenditure posed a challenge for small-scale fundraising efforts like 'roti-parcel' donations, though it was acknowledged the Act's rules could be managed. Other parties felt the requirement was fair, given the absence of exemptions.

The requirement to disclose sources of funding and the rules on campaign expenditure were treated as distinct issues. Compared to international standards, Fiji's fundraising reporting obligations were considered robust that offered a level of transparency. However, these requirements were notably stronger than those for campaign expenditure, which lacked specific reporting obligations or spending limits under the Electoral Act. In contrast, some democracies mandated disclosure of funding and sources either throughout the electoral cycle and campaign period or after the election concluded. The MOG noted that many countries sought to balance respect for political expression with efforts to reduce the inherent advantage held by candidates or parties with greater resources (often incumbents).

- 10.2 In response, the FEO has proposed amendments to the FLRC concerning campaign expenditure limits under the *Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013*.

10.3 It was noted that any donation exceeding \$10,000 must be made by a Fijian citizen, who is also required to disclose the donation within 10 days of making it. This requirement aligns with international best practice. The FEO looked at international best practices to see how it can be incorporated into Fiji's context and noted a transparency provision is allocated for declaration.

The FEO had considered some of the recommendations from stakeholders to some extent, but at the same time looked at international best practices. Those that were of convenient and of best practice to other countries were recommended to the FLRC.

11. Recommendation 11 - Introduction of costing requirements for campaign manifestos and policies

11.1 The 2018 MOG reported that some stakeholders had proposed political parties to submit their campaign manifestos for audit so that voters could better assess the costs and benefits of campaign promises. The report also noted that in some countries, parties voluntarily submitted their campaign platforms for audit typically by reputable accounting firms, non-partisan fiscal institutions, or government agencies such as a Ministry, Treasury, or Parliamentary Budget Office.

The 2018 MOG remained neutral on the value of auditing campaign manifestos and did not offer a specific recommendation on whether such audits should be required. Since 2018, amendments to section 116 of the Electoral Act 2014 introduced a requirement for political parties to disclose the sources of funding for proposed policies and initiatives during the 2022 Election Campaign. The Supervisor of Elections enforced this provision at least once during the campaign stating that the law required funding sources to be published 'immediately' after a policy or initiative was announced.

The MOG heard varied opinions from political parties on the requirement to cost policies and manifestos. Some parties felt they had the technical capacity to do so but noted that the requirement caused delays in publishing manifestos. It was also noted that the obligation hindered the development of certain policy platforms, particularly long-term policies that are difficult to cost.

Some parties expressed concern that, without financial or technical support for such audits, an incumbent government or a well-resourced opposition party would have an unfair advantage in developing and advertising policy positions during the campaign.

The MOG acknowledged that early submission of manifestos could help inform voters. However, it also noted that differing economic assessments of taxation and government spending may limit the usefulness of this process in accurately predicting a policy's broader economic impact.

In this regard, the MOG had recommended that the provision of technical and/or financial support to assist political parties in costing their manifestos and policy proposals to be considered. It also acknowledged the importance of ensuring that all

political parties and candidates have the capacity to meet the legislative requirement, which promotes a fair and equitable electoral process.

- 11.2 In response, the FEO submitted that, given the obligation of election management bodies to maintain political neutrality, it would be inappropriate for the EC or the FEO to provide support related to the costing of political party manifestos. However, the FEO has proposed to the FLRC on specific amendments to the relevant provisions under the Electoral Act that directly address the issue.

12. Recommendation 12 - Voter Information and Awareness efforts

- 12.1 The FEO had been responsible for providing timely and accurate voter information. However, the MOG assessed that long-term voter awareness programs should not have been handled solely by the FEO. Instead, they could have been developed and implemented collaboratively by electoral authorities, government agencies, and civil society. These efforts were to be led by the FEO, with vetted key messages ensuring consistency across all formats. While the FEO's own materials were developed separately, their core messages could have supported broader awareness activities and promoted essential electoral information like voter registration and polling.

Lessons learned and regional research on good practices showed that face-to-face, community-level activities especially in rural areas were the most effective for increasing voter awareness, particularly among women and low-literacy populations. Research consistently found these programs were better recalled by voters and considered the preferred and most trusted communication channel. Face-to-face sessions proved especially effective in rural contexts, as they could be tailored to specific situations and audience sensitivities.

Fiji, like other countries in the region, retained a strong oral tradition, and many people in the outlying islands struggled with full literacy. Although face-to-face awareness building was costly due to resource demands and high transportation costs, local culture and experience justified this approach as an effective way to engage the diverse communities on the voters list.

While other communication channels such as radio, TV, print, and digital media continued to be used, the MOG assessed that the FEO's approach in the lead-up to the 2022 elections, heavily relying on face-to-face meetings had been the most appropriate and effective methodology and should have been maintained and reinforced.

The MOG recognized the role of electoral officers in the field in providing voter information during their other duties, especially during the verification of the National Register of Voters. Since field staff were seen as a reliable source of election information after the 2018 general elections, the MOG recommended integrating face-to-face awareness into the FEO staff's responsibilities. However, due to the limited time electoral officers were deployed, they could not serve as the main channel for pre-polling voter awareness under the broad awareness program. Therefore, while

their support was valuable just before electoral events, civil society organisations including community and grassroots groups were seen as better suited to lead face-to-face awareness efforts between elections.

The MOG found the FEO's voter awareness efforts effective, particularly through the cascading training of trainers. Key activities and materials especially briefing flip charts proved helpful. However, continued partnerships with grassroots community groups could have further enhanced face-to-face efforts. These groups benefited from traditional communication methods like music, dance, folk theatre, and puppet shows. Such culturally rooted activities, conducted in local languages and reflecting island realities, were tied to political human rights and relied on social interaction, making their impact deeper and longer lasting.

Media representatives informed the MOG that, compared to earlier elections, the FEO had not fully utilized traditional media channels during the 2022 process to support voter information and awareness. They noted that enhancing the 2022 efforts could have strengthened existing partnerships and fostered new ones, enabling a broader range of communication channels to better reach communities beyond the main cities.

The MOG noted that the FEO's sustained collaboration with educational authorities, including the integration of elections into high school curricula, had significantly impacted voter education.

In this regard, the MOG recommended that the EC and FEO strengthened its efforts to build productive partnerships with civil society organisations during both the pre-election phase and following the issuance of the Writ and to actively work with CSOs in voter awareness, information, and education activities.

12.2 In response, it was advised that after the 2022 General Election, the FEO reviewed the process and gathered feedback from stakeholders, including CSOs, which was used to improve planning and improve service delivery for the next election. Apart from this, CSOs were consulted by the FEO for their input into the current Strategic Plan thereby having a direct contribution to the planning of FEO's activities for the period 2024 -2027. The FEO has actively engaged CSOs in awareness and engagement efforts through the Community Elections Advocate (CEA) Programme. Launched on October 14, 2025, the initiative deployed 450 trained volunteers across Fiji to raise election awareness in communities. This collaborative effort between the FEO and CSOs involved volunteers nominated by CSOs and trained by the FEO as CEAs. The 450 CEAs formed the initial rollout, with plans for more to be trained and deployed leading up to the next general election.

12.3 The FEO had consulted with different stakeholders and information gathered from the meeting was recommended to the FLRC. The operational aspects of FEO were also considered and submitted to the FLRC through the EC.

13. Recommendation 13 - Domestic and International Observers

13.0 The Minister for Elections holds the authority to invite both domestic and international observers to participate in a general election. However, the MOG noted that no domestic observers were invited for the 2022 General Election, nor was there any public notice issued to encourage or facilitate applications from domestic observer groups. In this regard, it was recommended that domestic observers and other international non-governmental observers be incorporated into future electoral processes.

13.1 In response, the EC and FEO stated that section 119 of the *Electoral Act 2014* currently empowers the Minister responsible for Elections to appoint or invite any person, organization, or entity to serve as observers for any election, with no restrictions on domestic observers. Agencies interested in participating in observation activities must apply for approval from the Minister, as the Commission does not hold jurisdiction over this matter. However, the FEO has submitted proposed amendments to section 19 of the Act to clarify the interpretation of this provision and to enable the implementation of processes that would directly address the issue of observer participation.

13.2 The FEO recognized the presence of keen domestic observers and the importance of international observers. While more mature democracies may not require observers, the FEO did not impose restrictions, as the law remained open to such participation. Instead of waiting for formal announcements, the FEO proactively empowered potential domestic observers ahead of the upcoming general election, as reflected in its strategic plan. Leading up to the election, the FEO engaged with NGOs many of which were expected to contribute observers from civil society organizations (CSOs). This empowerment focused on building their understanding of the electoral cycle, electoral processes, and underlying principles, with a specific emphasis on Fiji's context.

14. Recommendation 14 - Women Participation

14.0 With respect to women's representation in the electoral process, the MOG commended the strong presence of women in leadership roles within the FEO. During Pre-Polling and Election Day, observers noted that 73.79% of Electoral Officers and 67.54% of Presiding Officers were women.

The MOG noted a decline in both the proportion of female candidates and elected parliamentarians in the 2022 Election. This trend was partly attributed to the absence of safeguards for gender diversity within the open-list proportional representation system. In previous elections, some female and male candidates had entered parliament on the "coattails" of strong vote shares by party leaders, despite receiving relatively few individual votes. However, in 2022, although major party leaders again secured significant vote shares, and with a more fragmented election result and more parties winning seats in parliament, the opportunities for female candidates decreased.

14.1 In this regard, the MOG recommended that all stakeholders, especially political parties continue promoting women's representation and safeguarding gender diversity within

the electoral system, including among candidates. It further advised that gender safeguards be integrated into any future electoral reforms. In line with this, the MOG encouraged a review of restrictions on election-related activities for domestic and traditional CSOs, particularly regarding candidate development, to enable broader participation across all sectors of society, including women. Additionally, the FEO was urged to expand its voter outreach to include village women's committees, and the EC was encouraged to collaborate with women's advocacy groups and other CSOs in voter awareness and information efforts.

- 14.2 The FEO had proposed that party lists submitted during candidate nominations include at least 30 percent representation of each gender. While some existing political parties have successfully fielded women candidates who went on to win seats, broader empowerment of women within party structures remains limited.

In reviewing party lists from the past three General Elections, the FEO explored ways to improve women's participation without resorting to major legislative changes. It recommended trialing gender quotas within party lists as a preliminary step. This approach was informed by consultations with stakeholders affected by the proposal, as well as a review of international best practices.

The FEO suggested monitoring gender balance in party lists and, if the quota is accepted, implementing it in the next General Election. If not, further improvements could be considered in future legislative amendments.

Additionally, during engagements with organisations such as femLINKPacific and the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), potential candidates raised concerns about gender equity in political participation. The FEO emphasized that while it can empower individuals through voter education and electoral process awareness, the ultimate responsibility lies with political parties to strengthen inclusive structures.

15. Recommendation 15 - Participation by Voter with Disability

- 15.1 The MOG commends the intention of the Elections Disability Access Working Group (EDAWG) to continue to meet after the 2022 General Election, rather than disbanding and regrouping ahead of the next General Election, so that disability-related issues can be improved. The MOG observed that persons with disabilities were assisted to vote during pre-Polling and on Election Day, including voter materials being available in braille. However, noting the challenging locations in which many polling stations were located, of the polling stations visited, at the time of issuing this Interim Statement, MOG observer teams rated 66.28 percent of Pre-Polling and Election Day polling stations as having adequate infrastructure to support independent access for persons with disabilities. Where infrastructure was not adequate, the MOG assisted persons with disabilities to vote outside of the pre-polling and polling stations and even in some cases, with Polling Agents present, materials were taken closer to their residence to facilitate voting. MOG observer data indicated that only 58 percent of people with disabilities were assisted to vote.

In this regard, the MOG commends the steps taken by the FEO and the EDAWG to increase participation by persons with disabilities in the Fijian electoral process. To enhance the mainstreaming of this work, the MOG encouraged the continuation of the work of the Elections Disability Access Working Group (EDAWG), including in non-election years, to develop better support services for voters with disabilities.

In response, the FEO advised that since the last general election, EDAWG continued its efforts to enhance support services for voters with disabilities. Most notably, on 3 November 2023, EDAWG launched its 4-Year Workplan outlining a roadmap of activities leading up to the next general election. These included audits of accessibilities of venues, information materials, and websites; organizing disability-sensitive training for election officials and collaborating with development partners to create disability-inclusive policies for the FEO. The FEO has been actively monitoring this Workplan to ensure all planned activities are successfully implemented.

16. Laws and Guideline impacting Media

- 16.0 The MOG observed that while the media in Fiji generally enabled parties, candidates, and other stakeholders to communicate their messages to voters, many media stakeholders felt the environment in 2022 was more restrictive than in 2018. This perception led to a culture of self-censorship among journalists, driven by fears of severe penalties for statutory breaches.

Stakeholders also highlighted difficult regulations around publishing opinion polls, noting that no such polls had been released since new legislation was introduced in August 2022. These concerns aligned with Fiji's drop in the Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index from 57th in 2018 to 102nd in 2022 recorded its lowest ranking since 2014 and the lowest among Pacific nations.

Although the Media Industry Development Authority (MIDA) remained a statutory body, the MOG noted that it had become effectively non-operational, with no full-time staff and no longer performing its mandated functions. As a result, the MOG was unable to meet with MIDA representatives. In the absence of MIDA's active role, the FEO had assumed responsibilities previously shared with MIDA, such as media accreditation and monitoring, including requesting retractions or corrections under the new offence of "publication of false statements."

Despite MIDA's inactivity, media stakeholders reported they still felt bound by its provisions, including the requirement to seek approval for reporting during the blackout period. During the 2022 election period, the MOG observed instances where media were directed to submit questions about compliance to MIDA, further contributing to confusion.

Media organizations expressed a strong commitment to independent reporting but acknowledged that uncertainty about the legal framework, especially among younger journalists, discouraged open coverage of certain issues. The perceived risk of penalties under the MIDA Act remained a significant concern, even as its enforcement mechanisms had largely shifted to the Supervisor of Elections.

The MOG was informed by media organizations that regulatory changes introduced in August 2022 had effectively stifled the conduct of opinion polls. Stakeholders stated that opinion polling plays a valuable role in the electoral process by helping to improve public acceptance of election outcomes. The MOG noted with concern that no opinion polls had been conducted since the new legislation came into effect, particularly following findings by the Electoral Commission against a media organisation for non-compliance with the updated opinion polling guidelines.

16.1 In this regard, The MOG noted that the MIDA is widely understood by the media and other stakeholders to be no longer operational. Nevertheless, the MIDA Act 2010 and the Electoral Act 2014, which remain in force, endow MIDA with roles and responsibilities some of which have the potential to impose significant penalties on media organisations and certain individuals. The MOG recommended reviewing the MIDA’s mandate and operations to create greater certainty and clarity for media organisations.

17. Recommendation 17 - Laws and Guideline impacting Media

17.0 The MOG noted that Fiji’s requirement for media to obtain prior approval from MIDA for reporting during the blackout period appears an unnecessary constraint. The MOG recommended removing this requirement in the law or providing greater clarity through published guidelines.

17.1 The Media Industry Development Authority (MIDA) Act 2010 was repealed under the Media Industry Development (Repeal) Act 2023. As a result, all provisions within the Electoral Act that referenced MIDA were subsequently removed.

17.2 Through the review of the three existing electoral laws, any provisions within the Electoral Act 2014 that referenced the MIDA were recommended for deletion.

18. Recommendation 18 - EC guidelines

18.0 Noting the real risk of “fake news” and deliberate information distortion during elections, the MOG nevertheless recommended reviewing the appropriateness of the EC’s guidelines on the conduct of opinion polls and considered whether they, taken together with the MIDA Act 2010 and the Electoral Act 2014, contributed to an unreasonable constraint on the media’s ability to contribute to public discourse and political accountability.

18.1 In response, the FEO has recommended amendments to the FLRC regarding the provisions under the Electoral Act relating to the EC Guidelines on opinion polls (section 110A) to ensure workability to Fiji’s context.

19. Results App

19.0 As standard practice, the FEO introduced several measures to enhance the accuracy and security of the process. These included reducing the size of data-entry teams, doubling the number of supervisors, making technical choices to improve data integrity, and providing clerks with separate keyboards to minimise errors.

During tabulation, the FEO provided political parties with paper copies of the original protocol of results and printouts of system-entered data per polling station upon request. An independent audit of the RMIS was contracted to ensure the system's security and integrity.

To increase transparency, the FEO developed the FEO Results App to publish provisional results in real time, free of charge. Once official tabulation was completed, the Final National Results Tally was produced as a legally binding document and immediately presented to the EC for the declaration of results and seat allocation.

The EC returned the writ to the President on December 19, formally concluding the general elections. The MOG noted that the FEO Results App, used solely for publishing provisional results, was taken offline on December 14 due to a data anomaly. The MOG was promptly informed, and its observers attended the National Results Centre for a briefing by the SoE and IT staff. The error was resolved, and the app was restored after about four hours with corrected data.

Despite speculation that the provisional trend allowed for re-tabulation of official results, the MOG assessed this as unfounded, citing the public availability of pink slips containing the Protocol of Results. Several political parties and online commentators expressed concerns, but the MOG confirmed that the app did not affect vote counting and had no impact on official results.

The MOG observed that the results were published more slowly than in 2014 and 2018, attributing the delay to enhanced quality control measures following the anomaly. It found the tabulation process well-organised and the RMIS implementation efficient, with adequate checks to ensure accuracy. The MOG was confident that the FEO had taken appropriate steps to secure the RMIS and maintain result integrity.

In the 2022 General Election, 3,326 invalid votes were recorded 0.7% of ballots cast compared to 0.92% in 2018. On November 17, the FEO cross-checked ballot boxes with unusually high invalid vote rates, resulting in some ballots being reclassified as valid and included in the final count.

19.1 In response, it was advised that the FEO Results App will no longer be used to disseminate election results to the public and instead the FEO will be disseminating election results through its website, social media platforms and the media channels.

19.2 The FEO mobile App will not be used for the upcoming general election given that; firstly, results needed to be uploaded constantly. This put pressure on the FEO results team, meaning the verification process that was initially set up was compromised. In this case, the FEO perceived this as an added pressure which was not necessarily needed for the upcoming general election.

Secondly was the aspect of inclusivity. Feedback from stakeholders in terms of the mobile app was that it caused confusion given that the app had different results as compared to the website and the results possessed by media stakeholders.

As a result, the FEO intended to re-introduce the Media Centre which would allow media stakeholders to be present in the counting centre. These stakeholders will receive updates as to when the results come in from the National Result Centres in which they would already have the platform to disseminate the results to the public.

Written copy of the issues and clarification documents are uploaded along with this Report onto the Parliament website: www.parliament.gov.fj.

2.3 Sustainable Development Goals impact analysis

As part of its review, the Committee is also mindful of the requirements of the Standing Orders of Parliament whereby all matters before the Committee are to be reviewed through a gender lens. This is supplemented by the Committee's appreciation of the Parliament's role in contributing towards the Global Agenda, which Fiji is also committed to. The Committee noted that voter participation for women in the GE elections improved from 2018 to 2022.

“Women's participation, in 2022, there were 345,566 (49.8 percent) women registered to vote, compared to 316,431 (49.63 percent) in 2018. Accordingly, 2022 was the largest number of women voters registered to date”¹.

In the 2022 General Election, 56 of the 343 candidates were women, matching the number of female candidates in the 2018 election. However, due to an overall increase in candidate numbers, the proportion of women decreased to 16.3% in 2022, compared to 24% in 2018 and 17.7% in 2014².

It was also noted that during Pre-Polling and Election Day, the MOG observed that among the polling stations visited, 73.79 percent of polling day workers were women, and 67.54 percent of Presiding Officers were women³.

2.4 Key Findings

Following a thorough review of the evidence collated, the Committee has the following key findings.

1. The Committee noted that the 20 recommendations from the MOG and 8 from the Supervisor of Elections/Electoral Commission (SOE/EC), as outlined in the Joint Report, have undergone further analysis by the SOE/EC. The SOE/EC have refined and submitted its recommendations to the Fiji Law Reform Commission (FLRC) as part of its proposal to amend Fiji's electoral laws.
2. The Committee noted that three separate budgets were utilised during the 2022 election year:
 - a) The operating budget of the Fijian Elections Office;
 - b) The election-day operations budget; and
 - c) The Electoral Commission's own budget.

It was further noted that the budget reporting provided in the report lacked clarity and was found to be quite confusing.

¹ [Multinational-Observer-Group-2022-Fiji-Election-Final-Report-.pdf](#) (pg 84)

² [Multinational-Observer-Group-2022-Fiji-Election-Final-Report-.pdf](#) (pg 84)

³ [2022 General Election Joint Report by the Electoral Commission and Supervisor of Elections.pdf](#) (pg 232)

3. The Fiji Law Reform Commission has subsequently reviewed all recommendations that will be presented to Parliament.
4. Some of the electoral reform recommendations proposed by the MOG and SOE/EC will require amendments to Fiji's Constitution. However, as emphasized by the Electoral Commission Chair, these changes cannot proceed until a Referendum Act is passed by Parliament. This Act would establish the legal framework for conducting a national referendum, which is a mandatory step for approving constitutional amendments under Fiji's current legal system.
5. The Committee noted that the SOE/EC had consulted political parties, CSO and Media organisations through separate workshop that also formed its recommendation for electoral amendments to the Fiji Law Reform Commission. (Parliament consist of independent MP who are were not consultant)
6. The Committee has expressed concern regarding the declaration document published by the Fijian Elections Office (FEO), noting that it could potentially be weaponized by a political party that wins an election.
7. The Committee noted that political parties are still required to report campaign expenditures and have their accounts audited. It was also acknowledged that tighter disclosure rules for large donations for those exceeding \$10,000 are under consideration.
8. The Committee noted that the EC proposed a gender quota on political party candidate lists to encourage greater participation of women in elections.
9. The Committee noted the decision to discontinue the mobile election results app and reinstate the media centre to ensure accurate, verified dissemination of results.
10. The Committee noted that the EC supports advance public disclosure of election dates to allow sufficient preparation by voters and stakeholders.
11. The Committee noted that the EC is open to either retaining or separating the role of the SOE as Secretary to the EC, observing that the current arrangement enhances efficiency and information sharing.
12. The MOG observed that the media in Fiji generally enabled parties, candidates and others to present their messages to voters, and on balance, the media informed voters of their choices. The Committee noted that the MIDA Act has been repealed and therefore matters referring to MIDA in the electoral laws were recommended for deletion.

3.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

After extensive deliberation, the Committee makes the following recommendations:

1. The committee acknowledged the recommendations made by the MOG, EC, and FEO regarding the proposed amendments to the electoral laws. It is recommended that the Standing Committee review these changes once the report is tabled in Parliament.
2. The Committee had reservations on the declaration document published by the Fijian Elections Office (FEO), as it could be weaponized by a political party following an electoral victory. It is recommended that safeguards be introduced to prevent misuse and ensure the document serves its intended purpose of transparency and accountability.
3. The Committee supports the EC's position on advance public disclosure of election dates and recommends that such dates be announced early to ensure adequate preparation time for voters and stakeholders.
4. The Committee acknowledged the MOG's observation that the media in Fiji generally enabled parties, candidates, and others to present their messages to voters, and that it played a role in informing voter choice. However, the Committee recommended that a suitable replacement framework be considered by FEO to ensure media continues with its coverage during the general election with the elimination of the MIDA.

4.6 CONCLUSION

After reviewing the *2022 General Elections Joint Report by the Electoral Commission and Supervisor of Elections*, the Committee recommends that Parliament takes note of the contents of this report and endorse the Committee's recommendations.

MEMBER'S SIGNATURES



.....
Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure
(Chairperson)



.....
Hon. Faiyaz Koya
(Deputy Chairperson)



.....
Hon. Jone Usamate
(Member)



.....
Hon. Ratu Josaia Niudamu
(Member)



.....
Hon. Sachida Nand
(Member)



.....
Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu
(Member)

DATE: 06/11/25



17 October 2025

By Hand Delivery

The Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure
The Chairperson
Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights
Parliament of the Republic of Fiji
Government Buildings
Suva

Dear Chairperson

Clarification of Issues – 2022 General Elections Joint Report by the Electoral Commission and Supervisor of Elections

Ni Sa Bula Vinaka from the Fijian Elections Office (**FEO**).

Reference is made to your letter dated 13 October 2025. We acknowledge your invitation to a meeting with the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights (**Committee**) on Monday 20 October 2025 and confirm the attendance of the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission, Justice Usaia Ratuveli, the Director Corporate Services of the FEO, Mr. Sanjeshwar Ram, Compliance Coordinator of FEO, Ms. Rachel Simmons and myself.

We further note the request for our response to the above-mentioned subject. In this regard, kindly find below the outlined issues in your letter and our responses to the same.

1. Status of MOG Recommendations

We note that the Committee is seeking clarification on the status of the Multinational Observer Group (**MOG**) summary of recommendations on pages 13 to 18 of the 2022 General Election Joint Report (**Report**).

All correspondences must be addressed to the Supervisor of Elections and sent to the FEO Headquarters

FEO HEADQUARTERS

59-63 High Street, Toorak, Suva.
P.O.Box 2528,
Government Building, Suva, Fiji.

CONTACT US:

Phone: +679 331 6225
Email: info@feo.org.fj
Web: www.feo.org.fj

In this regard, we have enclosed with this letter the Status of Recommendations from the FEO & Electoral Commission 2022 General Election Joint Report for your reference. This document contains the extracted recommendations from pages 13 to 18 of the Report and their current status.

We further submit that where we have mentioned in above-mentioned enclosed document that the FEO made submissions on proposed amendments to the Fiji Law Reform Commission (**FLRC**), we wish to provide context in this regard and submit that the FLRC and the Electoral Commission (**Commission**) were mandated to undertake a comprehensive review and reform of the current electoral laws in consultation and collaboration with the Ministry of Justice (**MOJ**).

In this regard, submissions were submitted by the FEO and the Commission to the FLRC proposing amendments to the Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act 2012, Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013 and Electoral Act 2014. The amendments proposed by the FEO and the Commission were made considering, apart from other things, the recommendations from the report on the 2022 General Election by the MOG.

2. Election Expenditure

We note that the Committee seeks clarification with regards to the Election Expenditure on page 11 of the Report specifically on the difference in the amount of \$481,023.00 denoted as receipt and the operating expenditure budget of \$647,610.20.

We submit that the Commission follows the government financial year from August 2022 till July 2023 for its financial reporting and budgeting whereas the Report incorporates figures from January 2022 to December 2022. We submit that the total budget reflected in the Election Expenditure table on page 11 comprises of figures extracted from three (3) different budgets as follows:

- i) The first budget is the Operating Budget for the Commission for August 2021 to 2022 covering allocated funds from January 2022 to July 2022. This is incorporated as part of the total budget in the Report.
- ii) The second budget is the Election Budget of \$481, 023 allocated specially for expenditure related to writ to return of writ period which falls in the financial year from August 2022 till July 2023. This is incorporated as part of the total budget in the Report.
- iii) The third budget is the Operating Budget for the Commission for August 2022 to July 2023 in the amount of \$337,285.00. The Report reflects the funds allocated to cater for operating expenditure from August 2022 to December 2022. This is incorporated as part of the total budget in the Report.

The total budget allocated from January 2022 till December 2022 from the three (3) different budgets to meet the Commission's expenditure was \$647,610.20. From the allocated budget of \$647,610.20, \$304,667.93 was spent when the Report was compiled.

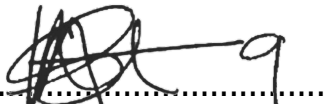
3. International Support

We note that the Committee is seeking clarification with regards to the funding provided by UNDP stated in page 11 of the Report and in particular whether this was an addition to the budget allocated for the year. The Committee is also querying the total amount provided to the Commission. The Committee is also seeking clarification as to whether this funding is incorporated in table three (3) of page 11 of the Report.

With regards to this, we submit that the support provided by UNDP was an additional to the FEO's budget and not the Commission's budget. This funding is not reflected on table three (3) on page 11 of the Report. However, this funding is reflected on page 68 of the 2022 General Election Supervisor of Elections report which forms part of the Report as Annex 6.

4. For any further clarifications, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Mataiciwa', written over a dotted line.

Ana Mataiciwa (Ms)

Supervisor of Elections

Encl:

1. Status of Recommendations from Fijian Elections Office & Electoral Commission 2022 General Election Joint Report

Status of Recommendations from Fijian Elections Office & Electoral Commission 2022 General Election Joint Report

Status of 2022 General Election MOG Recommendations (pages 13 – 16 of the Report)		
	MOG Recommendations	Status
1.	Review restrictions on election-related activities for domestic and traditional Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), particularly in relation to candidate development activities, which will result in wider participation in the electoral system by all sectors of society, including women (page 15).	We submit that the restrictions on election-related activities are stipulated under the Electoral Act 2014. The FEO has submitted proposed amendments to these provisions to the Fiji Law Reform Commission (FLRC) for consideration. This proposed amendment was drafted with the purpose to, amongst other things, address this MOG recommendation and provide clarity to CSO involvement in election related activities.
2.	Conduct an external audit of the National Voter Register to ensure accuracy and public confidence (page 17).	The Commission had advertised an Expression of Interest on four different occasions (03/11/21, 20/11/21, 01/08/22 and 20/08/22) inviting reputable organisations locally and internationally to submit their biddings regarding the audit of Fiji's National Register of Voters. Despite the Expression of Interest being advertised numerous times, there were still no suitable bidders. On 09/09/22 the Commission agreed in its meeting to re-advertise the Expression of Interest for the audit of Fiji's National Register of Voters after the 2022 General Election is conducted as the Writ could be issued at any time from the date of that meeting. Currently, the Commission is continuing its efforts to source options for the external audit of the National Register of Voters.
3.	Clarify the validity of voter cards and other allowable documents early ahead	Since the last general election, the FEO has taken proactive action to minimize voter confusion with regards to the validity of voter cards. The FEO conducted a Voter Perception Survey in 2024 to gather feedback on the experiences of voters with our services, the previous general election

	of next election to maximise voter turn-out (page 18).	and the best means of engaging voters. These have led to FEO expanding reach to voters through the launch of new revamped social media platforms and the launch of an FEO mascot. Apart from this, the FEO consistently pushes out awareness on voter registration requirements through our social media platforms and voter registration drives.
4.	Consider the appropriateness of the severe criminal penalties in electoral legislation, including the Electoral Act 2014, and whether the desire to deter criminal conduct, ultimately diminishes public confidence in the EC and FEO (aspirational recommendation, page 20).	The FEO has proposed amendments to all offence provisions under the three electoral laws in an effort to consolidate offences and harmonize penalties. These recommendations were submitted to the FLRC for consideration.
5.	Consider whether the length and detail of the Electoral Act 2014 affects the public's readability and understanding of the legal framework regarding elections, to the detriment of public confidence. Consistent with recommendations in 2018, the MOG also recommends relevant Fijian institutions work towards consolidating and simplifying relevant electoral legislation, including the Electoral Act 2014 (aspirational recommendation, page 20).	Currently, there are 60 sections in the Electoral Act, 32 sections in the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act and 29 sections in the Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act. Consolidating these different laws into one is not necessary as the respective laws each has its own function. For instance, the Electoral Act highlights processes surrounding the conduct of elections, the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act focuses on the registration and administration of political parties and the Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act concentrates on voter registration and the administration of the National Register of Voters. Instead of consolidating, the Commission and the FEO had sought to clarify certain provisions of each electoral law and this was reflected as follows: 36 amendments made to the Electoral (Amendment) Act, 2021 which commenced on 07 June 2021. 11 amendments made to the Electoral (Registration of Voters) (Amendment) Act 2021 which commenced on 07 June 2021. 13 amendments made to the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) (Amendment) Act 2021 which commenced on 07 June 2021.

		2 amendments made to the Electoral (Registration of Voters) (Amendment) (No.2) Act, 2021 which commenced on 06 October 2021; and 5 amendments made to the Electoral (Amendment) Act 2022 which commenced on 02 September 2022. These respective amendments have now allowed the EC and FEO to deliver more effective election operations and further promotes consistency between the electoral laws in regards to the definition of certain terms and processes. With the electoral review and reform undertaken by the FLRC and the Commission this year, the FEO has also submitted proposals on recommended amendments to our electoral laws in the efforts to further improve the readability and clarity of these laws.
6.	Review the appropriateness of the Supervisor of Election's (SoE) powers, particularly in subsections 6(1A) - (1C) of the Electoral Act 2014 (page 23).	The FEO has taken this recommendation into account and have submitted proposed amendments to these sections to the FLRC.
7.	Ensure best efforts are undertaken to use full parliamentary consultation processes when amending electoral legislation, including providing advice to relevant decision-makers regarding the appropriateness of using Standing Order 51 when passing amendments to election-related legislation (aspirational recommendation, page 23).	The FEO and the Commission have no mandate in relation to the parliamentary process. However, we support the use of the full parliamentary consultation and legislative amendment process. The review and reform of the electoral laws was jointly undertaken by the FLRC and the Commission this year and the FEO and the Commission actively participated in this process by submitting our proposed amendments to the Electoral (Registration of Voters Act) 2012, Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013 and the Electoral Act 2014.

	Develop and better publicise procedures for the EC to ensure due process in considering complaints against the SoE, political parties and the FEO (page 26).	The Commission has substantive plans to review internal procedures in the beginning of 2026 in order to ensure due process is afforded and that there are proper mechanisms in place dealing with these complaints.
8.	Review the appropriateness of section 115 of the Electoral Act 2014, especially when its effect on free political debate is considered cumulatively with the newly inserted subsections 110A and 144A (aspirational recommendation, page 28).	The FEO has made submissions to the FLRC proposing amendments to section 115 that address this issue. These proposed amendments were made taking into account MOG recommendations and submissions from CSO's, political parties and other important stakeholders following the 2022 General Election.
9.	Develop guidelines for the conduct of Ministers, Members of Parliament and the civil service when the government is in 'caretaker mode' to reinforce public confidence in a level political playing field (aspirational recommendation, page 35).	The FEO and the Commission does not have the mandate or the power to make decisions with regards to the conduct of Ministers, Members of Parliament and the civil service when the government is in 'caretaker mode'. This is a matter for Parliament and Cabinet to make decisions on. However, we understand that democratic international good practice recognises the value of guidelines for their conduct during the caretaker period to ensure public confidence in elections.
11.	Require all political parties to report campaign expenditure and consider setting campaign expenditure limits (page 37).	With the review of the three (3) electoral laws conducted by the FLRC and the Commission this year, the FEO has actively participated by making submission to the FLRC regarding this issue. The FEO has proposed substantive amendments with regards to campaign expenditure limits in the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013.
12.	Consider providing technical support and potentially public funding for the costing of parties' political manifestos to ensure voters have reliable policy information (aspirational recommendation, page 38).	We submit that as election management bodies are required to remain politically neutral, it would be inappropriate for such support in relation to political party manifestos to be provided by Commission or the FEO.

		However, we submit that with the electoral law review conducted by FLRC this year, the FEO in its submission to FLRC on proposed amendments, have recommended amendments to these provisions under the Electoral Act that directly address this issue.
13.	The MOG recommends that the EC and FEO strengthen efforts to build productive partnerships with civil society organisations during both the pre-election phase and following the issuance of the Writ, and to actively work with CSOs in voter awareness, information, and education activities (page 41).	Following the 2022 General Election, the FEO conducted a review of the 2022 General Election and sought feedback from stakeholders including CSO's which was taken on board to improve our planning for the next general election and for the improvement of our service delivery. Apart from this, CSO's were consulted by the FEO for their input into our current Strategic Plan thereby having a direct contribution to the planning of our activities for the period 2024 -2027. Further, the FEO has actively engaged CSO's in our awareness and engagement activities through the Community Elections Advocate (CEA) Programme. The CEA Programme was an initiative launched October 14, 2025 where 450 trained volunteers would be deployed across Fiji to conduct awareness on elections in communities. This CEA Programme is a collaborative approach between FEO and CSO's where all of these volunteers were those that were nominated by CSO's from their pool of volunteers to be trained by FEO as CEA's. The 450 CEA's are part of the initial rollout with more CEA's planned to be trained and deployed until the next general election.
14.	Consider how domestic observers and other international non-governmental observers can be incorporated into future electoral processes (page 41).	Currently, section 119 of the Electoral Act 2014 clearly states that the Minister responsible for Elections may appoint or invite any person, organisation or entity to be observers for any elections. There is no restriction to domestic observers. Any agency interested in observation activity must apply for approval from the said Minister. The Commission does not have any jurisdiction in this matter. However, the FEO has also submitted recommendations for amendment to section 19 which provides clarity on the reading of this provision and also allow for processes to be implemented which will directly address this issue.
15.	All stakeholders continue their efforts to promote women's representation and safeguard gender diversity in the electoral system, including as	Following the 2022 General Election, the FEO has prioritized strengthening its relationship with all stakeholders including CSO's.

	candidates; and that gender safeguards be integrated into any electoral system reforms (page 42).	The collaborative CEA initiative by the FEO with CSO's includes FWRM, Femlink Pacific and faith-based organizations, all of whom advocate in the space of women's representation. They have nominated volunteers to be trained by FEO as CEA advocates and push out electoral information and awareness in their communities. Part of this would include them pushing this information to the people they advocate for in their communities including women.
16.	Continue the work of the Elections Disability Access Working Group (EDAWG) to develop better support services for voters with disabilities (page 43).	Since the last general election, EDAWG has continued work in the space of developing better support services for voters with disabilities. Most notably, on 03 November 2023 EDAWG launched its 4 Year Workplan setting out the roadmap of activities for the next four years including up to the next general election including accessibility audits on venues, information materials and websites, organizing disability-sensitive training for election officials and collaborating with our development partners to develop disability-inclusive policies for the FEO. The FEO continues to monitor this Workplan to ensure that all activities are achieved.
17.	Review the Media Industry Development Authority of Fiji's (MIDA) mandate and operations and relevant procedures to create greater certainty and clarity for media organisations (aspirational recommendation, page 46).	MIDA Act 2010 has been repealed under the Media Industry Development (Repeal) Act 2023 and consequently all provisions under the Electoral Act referring to MIDA has been deleted. Further, the Commission and the FEO are not in charge of the media regulatory framework and cannot make decisions regarding this.
18.	Review the operation of media blackout requirement in the law and providing greater clarity through published guidelines (page 46).	The MIDA Act 2010 has been repealed under the Media Industry Development (Repeal) Act 2023 and consequently all provisions under the Electoral Act referring to MIDA has been deleted.
19.	Review the appropriateness of the EC guidelines on the conduct of opinion polls and their effective constraint on the media's ability to contribute to	The FEO has recommended amendments to the FLRC regarding the provisions under the Electoral Act relating to the EC Guidelines on opinion polls (section 110A) to ensure workability to Fiji's context, ensure clarity of processes for opinion polls.

	public discourse and political accountability (page 46).	
20.	Review the policies and methods of communication of important election information, including provisional and final results, and consider a simple analogue backup, such as a manual results tally board, to complement the digital FEO Results App with strengthened verification protocols (page 58).	We submit that the FEO Results App will no longer be used to disseminate election results to the public and instead the FEO will be disseminating election results through our website, social media platforms and through the media channels.
Status of Further Recommendations by Electoral Commission and FEO (pages 16 – 18 of Joint Report)		
	MOG Recommendations	Status
1.	EC Institutional Continuity, Accountability and Effectiveness	We submit that this is solely a constitutional matter. We understand that constitutional review is outside of the mandate for the review of the national electoral legislation and therefore any revision to the terms of appointment of Commission members are solely matters for the government, the President and the Constitutional Offices Commission to initiate.
2.	Secretary to the EC	We submit that we have recommended to the FLRC the amendment of this provision under the Electoral Act 2014 in support of this recommendation.
3.	Audit of FEO Systems	We submit that internal audits of our core systems remain ongoing in preparation for the next general election. With regards to the external audit of the National Register of Voters (NRV), we submit that plans are in place to ensure that the NRV is audited before the next general election.
4.	Legal Framework	(a) Maintaining Election Management Body Neutrality We submit that we have made recommendations to the FLRC for the amendment of provisions in the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013 which directly supports this recommendation.

		(b) 5.Legislative Stability in Election Year We submit that legislative authority is reserved to Parliament under Part A of Chapter 3 of the Constitution. Therefore, constitutional amendment would be the most appropriate way to achieve the aim in this recommendation. (c) Early Disclosure of Election Date We submit that the FEO supports this proposal but understood constitutional review to be outside the mandate for the review of the national electoral legislation and therefore has not prepared any draft amendments to this effect. The adoption of a fixed national election may require constitutional amendment the decision of which rests with the government. (d) Enhancing Voter Participation via Access to Elected Representatives We submit Fiji’s current electoral system is stipulated under the Constitution and any decision regarding the revision or adoption of an alternative system are decisions for the Parliament and Government of the day to decide.
5.	Legal Framework: Further Recommendations of the EC	(a) Independent Registrar of Political Parties, and the Greater Public Disclosure We have made proposals on amendments to the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act to the FLRC to ensure transparency of political party funding and expenditure. Further, the FEO has sought to address the potential for misuse of the position of the Registrar through substantive amendments recommended to FLRC such as removing excessive powers and clarifying the roles and functions of this position.

		(b) Enhancing Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the Electoral System The rights of persons to participate in voting are prescribed in section 55 of the Constitution, including that those who have been declared to be of unsound mind and not eligible (and this is mirrored in the Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act 2012). The FEO considers any change would require a review of the Constitution. The FEO acknowledges that not all polling stations are easily accessible for some people with disabilities, however on average FEO requires 2,200 polling stations. These must be located throughout the country where there are concentrations of voters, and are predominantly schools and village or community halls. The FEO is not in a position to modify all these state or publicly owned premises, and as the relevant authorities continue to enhance accessibility to their premises FEO and voters will benefit from the enhanced accessibility. FEO has revised the provisions in the Electoral Act 2014 to enhance the voting experience at the polling station for eligible voters living with disabilities.
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[VERBATIM REPORT]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE, LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

ANNUAL REPORT

2022 General Elections Joint Report - Electoral Commission and Supervisor of Elections

ENTITY: Electoral Commission
Fijian Elections Office
VENUE: Big Committee Room (East Wing)
DATE: Monday, 20th October, 2025

VERBATIM REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE, LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS HELD AT THE BIG COMMITTEE ROOM, PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, ON MONDAY, 20TH OCTOBER, 2025 AT 2.38 P.M.

Present

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|---|----------|
| 1. | Hon. Ratu R.S.S. Vakalalabure | - | Chairman |
| 2. | Hon. S. Nand | - | Member |
| 3. | Hon. J. Usamate | - | Member |
| 4. | Hon. F.S. Koya | - | Member |

Submittee: **Fijian Elections Office and Electoral Commission Fiji**

- | | | | |
|----|------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| 1. | Justice Usaia Ratuveli | - | Chairman |
| 2. | Ms. Ana Mataciwa | - | Supervisor of Elections |
| 3. | Ms. Rachael Simmons | - | Compliance Coordinator |
| 4. | Mr. Sanjayshwar Ram | - | Director, Corporate Services |

Honourable Members, members of the public, the Secretariat, viewers, ladies and gentlemen; a very good afternoon to you all.

At the outset, for information purposes, under Standing Order 111 of the Standing Orders of Parliament, please, note that the submission is open to the public and media, and is also being streamed live on Parliament's website and social media platforms.

For any sensitive information concerning the matter before us this afternoon that cannot be disclosed in public, this can be provided to the Committee, either in private or in writing. However, please, be advised that there are only a few specific circumstances that allow for non-disclosure, which includes national security matters, third-party confidential information, personnel or human resource matters, and Committee deliberation and development of Committee's recommendation and reports.

This is a parliamentary meeting, and all information gathered is covered under the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act. However, please, bear in mind that we do not condone slander or libel of any sort, and any information brought before this Committee should be based on facts.

In terms of the protocol of this Committee, please, minimise the usage of mobile phones and all mobile phones are to be on silent mode while the meeting is in progress. I also wish to remind honourable Members and our guests this afternoon that all questions to be asked are to be addressed through the Chair.

Honourable Members, I would now like to take this time to welcome our submittees this afternoon. Appearing before the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights is the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission Fiji, Justice Usaia Ratuveli; the Supervisor of Elections, Ms. Ana Mataciwa; Director, Corporate Services, Mr. Sanjayshwar Ram; and Compliance Coordinator, Ms. Rachel Simmons.

[Introduction of Members of the Committee]

Honourable Members, today, the Committee will be hearing submission from the Fijian Elections Office (FEO) and the Electoral Commission Fiji on the 2022 General Elections Joint Report by the Electoral Commission and the Supervisor of Elections.

Without further ado, I now give this time to the Supervisor of Elections (SOE) and the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission to, please, proceed with their public submission. I understand that this is a fairly quick one where there are three questions from the Committee so we can get them clearly out of the way. You have the floor, SOE.

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We believe there are three questions that we need to clarify today, beginning with the status of the Multinational Observer Group (MOG) recommendations from the 2020 General Election, the Election expenditures, as well as the international support.

We will start off with the 2022 recommendations and its status. There are currently 20 recommendations, and we have further recommendations that are also in place. In terms of the MOG 2022 General Election recommendations, we will go through it one by one.

Recommendation No. 1

Review restrictions on election-related activities for domestic and traditional Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), particularly in relation to candidate development activities, which will result in wider participation in the electoral system by all sectors of society, including women (page 15).

Response

The restriction on election-related activities are currently stipulated in the Electoral Act 2014. However, you might be aware that there was a review done to all the three existing electoral laws.

We had submitted proposed amendments to this provision, Mr. Chairman, for consideration. The proposed amendments that we have submitted also reflected on some of these restrictions. This one, in particular, looks at section 115 of the Electoral Act 2014 which currently requires those who receive funds from foreign partners, et cetera, to make an application to the FEO once the election date is announced. The FEO will then review their application and see whether they should be granted approval to conduct certain electoral activities, such as probably a public forum or a poll, et cetera.

What we have proposed for the new amendments is that the Electoral Commission to just do a guideline and then assist those who intend to do some civic governance or election information next year as we prepare for the next general election. So, that is one of the proposals that we have put forth in the Fiji Law Reform Commission submission. If it does come through, that will be one avenue where we could work closely with the CSOs, to ensure that the stakeholders, especially the general public, receive consistent information throughout.

Recommendation No. 2

Conduct an external audit of the National Voter Register to ensure accuracy and public confidence (page 17).

Response

This is still pending. It was actually one of the recommendations from the previous General Elections as well. However, we had already made an undertaking to this Committee that this

is something that we will consider as we prepare for the next general election.

Recommendation No. 3

Clarify the validity of voter cards and other allowable documents early ahead of next election to maximise voter turn-out (page 18).

Response

We do understand that whilst preparing for the 2022 General Election, there were some mixed messages from the FEO in terms of the green card, blue card, as well as the details surrounding documents that are required for obtaining such cards.

As we now prepare for the next upcoming general election, we are putting some proactive measures to minimise voter confusion. At the moment, we have started with voter registrations. We have been doing it for our local citizens, however, we have started with our Fijian diaspora last month.

What we have done now which we lacked previously was awareness, which means our Fijians to be aware of the requirements to be brought if they intend to register as new voters or if they want to replace their cards.

Recommendation No. 4

Consider the appropriateness of the severe criminal penalties in electoral legislation, including the Electoral Act 2014, and whether the desire to deter criminal conduct, ultimately diminishes public confidence in the EC and FEO (aspirational recommendation, page 20)

Response

Mr. Chairman, our new proposed amendment is that we have requested for the consolidation of offences and harmonising the penalties. Basically, if you look at our three electoral laws, we have different offences that are spread throughout the existing electoral laws. We recommend that we categorize these offences basically either as illegal electoral practice offences which are minor offences, or corrupt electoral practices which are the major or more serious offences that might require prison term or disqualification as a voter.

Recommendation No. 5

Consider whether the length and detail of the Electoral Act 2014 affects the public's readability and understanding of the legal framework regarding elections, to the detriment of public confidence. Consistent with recommendations in 2018, the MOG also recommends relevant Fijian institutions work towards consolidating and simplifying relevant electoral legislation, including the Electoral Act 2014 (aspirational recommendation, page 20).

Response

We do understand that the three electoral laws are lengthy, but if we look at them closely, the Electoral Act 2014 has 60 provisions, the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013 has 32 provisions, and the Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act 2012 has 29 provisions. These three electoral laws look at different administrative parts of the processes.

The Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act 2012 focusses on the administration of the National Register of Voters, whereas the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013 focusses on the administration of political parties, whilst the Electoral Act 2014 looks at the entire electoral processes. If we look at these three laws, they represent

the three different factors in the electoral cycle so at the moment, it is quite convenient when there are three separate legislations for us, as we are able to ensure that all the provisions in these three different laws are actioned effectively and efficiently.

Recommendation No. 6

Review the appropriateness of the Supervisor of Election's (SoE) powers, particularly in subsections 6(1A) and (1C) of the Electoral Act 2014 (page 23).

Response

A full review of the SOE's power has been recommended when we made submissions, basically moderating the power to make it more consistent with the current practices with other election management bodies. We do realise that the powers that were stipulated in section 6 (1A) and (1C) is quite excessive, so we had proposed for it to be relooked into.

Recommendation No. 7

(a) Ensure best efforts are undertaken to use full parliamentary consultation processes when amending electoral legislation, including providing advice to relevant decision-makers regarding the appropriateness of using Standing Order 51 when passing amendments to election-related legislation (aspirational recommendation, page 23).

Response

I believe our Electoral Commission and also the FEO have always spoken in previous events of our support for full parliamentary consultation, especially for amendments to the three electoral laws that look into the democracy of the country. We have actively participated in the Fiji Law Reform Commission process and, at the same time, we anticipate that when it does go through the parliamentary process, that we will also be part of those consultative processes.

We are also aware that previously, most provisions had gone through Standing Order 51, which most of the amendments that was done prior to the 2022 General Election. When we looked at other international best practices, we also noted the importance of having parliamentary processes in place instead of what we had practised previously.

(b) Develop and better publicise procedures for the EC to ensure due process in considering complaints against the SoE, political parties and the FEO (page 26).

Response

A proposal was made through the Fiji Law Reform Commission. This is an activity for us, so come January of next year, Electoral Commission Fiji and the FEO will be working closely together to ensure that all the administrative policies and procedures are in place before we move into the general election preparation. So, this is something that we have considered, and it will be implemented in January when we have our workshop.

Recommendation No. 8

Review the appropriateness of section 115 of the Electoral Act 2014, especially when its effect on free political debate is considered cumulatively with the newly inserted subsections 110A and 144A (aspirational recommendation, page 28).

Response

As I have mentioned before, this is something that we have also confirmed that we had proposed amendments to. If they do come through, then we will be able to work closely with our CSOs, to ensure that electoral information that are disseminated to our voters are effective and consistent at the same time.

Recommendation No. 9

Develop guidelines for the conduct of Ministers, Members of Parliament and the civil service when the government is in 'caretaker mode' to reinforce public confidence in a level political playing field (aspirational recommendation, page 35).

Response

We do not have any mandate or power to make decision on this recommendation. So, we will leave this to the Parliament and Cabinet to make a decision on.

Recommendation No. 11

Require all political parties to report campaign expenditure and consider setting campaign expenditure limits (page 37).

Response

Just as we mentioned, these were some things that we had also recommended when we did the review of our three electoral laws. So, all political parties are currently required to report campaign expenditures and have their accounts audited.

Recommendation No. 12

Consider providing technical support and potentially public funding for the costing of parties' political manifestos to ensure voters have reliable policy information (aspirational recommendation, page 38).

Response

We submit that as an election management body, we are required to be politically neutral.

Recommendation No. 13

The MOG recommends that the Electoral Commission and FEO strengthen efforts to build productive partnerships with CSOs during both, the pre-election phase and following the issuance of the Writ, and to actively work with CSOs in voter awareness, information, and education activities (page 41).

Response

In terms of partnership with CSOs, we do recognise that when this MOG recommendation was published, we did not have that relationship with the CSOs, but lessons learned from the 2022 General Election, which is also reflected in our new strategic plan, which is one of the pillars strengthening collaboration with our stakeholders. So, this is something that we are currently and actively engaged in.

To attest to this, at this very moment, we have a community election advocate programme which was implemented earlier this month. This programme was launched on 14th October, so it allowed for 450 trained volunteers who have been handpicked by the CSOs to be trained on election information, and then they are deployed across Fiji to do awareness and elections in the communities. We anticipate that we will continue to use this community election advocates as we gear towards the upcoming general election.

Recommendation No. 14

Consider how domestic observers and other international non-governmental observers can be incorporated into future electoral processes (page 41).

Response

We do understand that there have been talks to have domestic observers as well to be included in the upcoming general election. Even though there have been talks and we have made recommendations to the Fiji Law Reform Commission, what we have also done on the ground is starting to empower our CSOs. So, we have had various workshops that they have participated in.

Firstly, we had workshops that looked at the electoral cycle as a whole and then we looked at international best practices, concentrating on Fiji. So, we hope in the upcoming general election that they do consider domestic observers since they have already been participating to enable them to understand the electoral processes that they will observe if they are given the opportunity to do so.

Recommendation No. 15

All stakeholders continue their efforts to promote women's representation and safeguard gender diversity in the electoral system, including as candidates; and that gender safeguards be integrated into any electoral system reforms (page 42).

Response

As I have mentioned, following the 2022 General Election, the FEO has been prioritising strengthening relationship with our stakeholders. We have had initiatives in place in which we had worked closely with certain CSOs, such as the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, the femLINKPacific, even some faith-based organisations. We also did some advocacy in the spaces of women's representation as well, so this is an ongoing activity for us.

Recommendation No. 16

Continue the work of the Elections Disability Access Working Group (EDAWG) to develop better support services for voters with disabilities (page 43).

Response

We have the Election Disability Access Working Group (EDAWG) which is currently active. At the moment, they have a four-year work plan. Basically, this working group do come together and they provide recommendations on how we could improve our electoral services, some lessons learned from the previous General Election and improvements on it, as we move towards the next general election.

Recommendation No. 17

Review the Media Industry Development Authority of Fiji's (MIDA) mandate and operations and relevant procedures to create greater certainty and clarity for media organisations (aspirational recommendation, page 46).

Response

As we are all aware, the Media Act has been repealed, so any provisions under the Electoral Act 2014 referring to MIDA, through the review of the three existing electoral laws, we have recommended for deletion of the same.

Recommendation No. 18

Review the operation of media blackout requirement in the law and providing greater clarity through published guidelines (page 46).

Response

So, basically, anything to do with MIDA, we have requested their removal from the Electoral Act 2014.

Recommendation No. 19

Review the appropriateness of the Electoral Commission guidelines on the conduct of opinion polls and their effective constraint on the media's ability to contribute to public discourse and political accountability (page 46).

Response

We have made recommendations for amendments. We did have the guidelines that were in place but for clarity of the processes on opinion poll, et cetera, we need to ensure that the Electoral Commission Guideline is basically in Fiji's context, so that is something that has been considered as well.

Recommendation No. 20

Review the policies and methods of communication of important election information, including provisional and final results, and consider a simple analogue backup, such as a manual results tally board, to complement the digital FEO Results App with strengthened verification protocols (page 58).

Response

There has been an Electoral Commission decision that was made earlier this year in terms of the FEO Results Mobile App, that will no longer be used for the upcoming general election.

Instead, the FEO is looking at other options of disseminating election results through our FEO website, social media platform, and we are also going to bring back the media centre. We did have it in 2014 and 2018, but we removed it in 2022 and replaced it with a mobile application. We saw the repercussion of it, we have learned from it, and so we are bringing back the traditional methods of disseminating election results.

Mr. Chairman and honourable Members below are further recommendations.

Recommendation No. 1

EC Institutional Continuity, Accountability and Effectiveness.

Response

We submit that it is a constitutional matter. This is something that is beyond us, but we are ready to accept whatever the new changes to it.

Recommendation No. 2

Secretary to the Electoral Commission.

Response

Basically, when we look at that, it is something that was an amendment to the Act, but we do understand the importance of the independence of the Electoral Commission and FEO.

We also understand the importance, if need be, if they need a separate one, then that is something that we will also accept. However, whatever the outcome, we have practised both. In the 2014 General Election, we had a separate Electoral Commission Secretary. In the previous one, after the amendments, we have had the SOE, and we are ready to provide the services, whatever the recommendation is.

Recommendation No. 3
Audit of FEO Systems.

Response

We do submit that the internal audit is quite important, especially for our core system. In preparation for the upcoming general election, this is something that we will ensure that we do carry out before we move into election readiness for the upcoming general election and we do note that one of these is the National Register of Voters.

Recommendation No. 4
Legal Framework.

Response

In terms of maintaining the election management body neutrality, we have made a recommendation to the Fiji Law Reform Commission for amendment of provisions, particularly in the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013, basically to align with international good practices, standards and compliance with Fiji's obligations.

For the legislative stability in the election year, the legislative authority is reserved for Parliament. Therefore, constitutional amendment would be the most appropriate way to achieve this, and that is our submission Mr. Chairman.

In terms of the disclosure of election date, we definitely support this proposal because when we are made aware of the election dates, not only does it allow us more time to prepare logistically, it also allows our Fijians who are the users of the electoral processes, to also prepare themselves and be ready to come in and cast their vote.

In terms of enhancing voter participation via access to elected representatives, Fiji's current electoral system is stipulated in the Constitution, Mr. Chairman, so any decision on this would have to be a decision for Parliament and the respective bodies.

Recommendation No. 5
Legal Framework: Further Recommendations of the EC

Response

For the legal framework in terms of the independent Registrar of political parties and greater public disclosures, we have made proposals on amendments to the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013. We have also sought to address the potential for misuse of the position of the registrars through substantive amendments as well to the Fiji Law Reform Commission, and also the removing of excessive powers and just basically clarifying the roles and functions of this position.

Lastly, enhancing participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral system, so we do acknowledge that not all polling stations are easily accessible. However, our team is basically

trying their best to go through these 2,200 polling stations and check on their accessibilities, not only accessibility in terms of getting voters to those areas, but also accessibilities in terms of connectivity. We have schools, villages and community halls, most of which meet this standard. However, for those that do not meet that standard, we try our best to lease with the owners just to make sure that there is comfort for our voters when they do come in to vote.

In terms of their polling station and having a person to be with them when they cast their vote as well, that is something that is already in the Act. Other than that, we do intend not to leave anyone behind in terms of electoral processes and casting their vote on election day. So, we are trying our best to facilitate all categories of Fijians.

Our Director, Corporate Service, will take us through number 2 – Election Expenditure and number 3 – International Support.

MR. S. RAM.- Thank you. Mr. Chairman and honourable Members of the Committee, in terms of the two issues, the first one being the budget for the Electoral Commission, please, note that there were three budgets used during that one financial year, because this expenditure was incurred from January to December.

The first operating budget was used for FEO. The second budget was used for election - the Writ Day. The FEO and Electoral Commission are allocated two budgets for the election year. The third budget that was used was for the next financial year for 2022. So, the three budgets combined, as I have given in detail, totalled \$647,610. That was the reason why the expenditure from three budgets were combined and it gave a total figure for January to December – the finances that was incurred by the Electoral Commission.

With regard to the second part - international support, we submit that the support provided by the UNDP was additional to the FEO's budget and not the Commission's budget. This funding is not reflected in Table 3 of Page 11 of the Report. However, this funding is reflected on page 68 of the 2022 General Election Supervisor of Elections Report, which forms part of this Report as Annex 6. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much, Director Corporate, and Madam Supervisor.

Honourable members, I now open the floor for questions to our guests this afternoon. Are there any supplementary questions to the responses given by the SOE? Honourable Koya?

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and SOE. If I could just go back to the SOE's submission in the beginning with the MOG recommendations. In your submissions that were made to the Fiji Law Reform Commission regarding amendments to certain provisions, just an example, you talked about the CSO one. These submissions that were made, were made of your own volition or was there an exercise that was taken by the Electoral Commission or the SOE's Office with respect to what might be the thoughts of the people and institutions, et cetera? Did you go through that consultation exercise before making those submissions to the Fiji Law Reform Commission?

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- In terms of our recommendations to the Fiji Law Reform Commission, after the 2022 General Election, we did have a review with different stakeholders. Whatever was gathered from this review were then stipulated into recommendations.

Apart from what we had gathered from our stakeholders, we then looked at operational aspects of things - whether operationally they are achievable, some of those feedback, and then from

there, we then submitted to the Fiji Law Reform Commission through the Electoral Commission.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- When you say stakeholders, you mean across the board - political parties and the general public, CSOs, et cetera?

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- Yes, we did have our review. We categorised it. We had one for our CSOs, then we had one specifically for parties, one for our media, and then we had one even for our international communities, as well as our donors. So, whatever feedback was gathered from there, we were then able to put it into recommendations.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Just quickly, on the external audit - that recommendation that came in the MOG Report, I know you explained the last time also that there was simply no one coming forward to actually do the audit. To date, has the Commission found a way to actually try and get someone to do it, even if it is offshore, or if there is another methodology that can be used to get that external audit done?

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- In terms of this external audit, we do note that in previous events where we look for audit, it was a last minute too from our end. However, for this one, we do anticipate having it audited way before our election readiness timeline.

As of the current status, we have not submitted any recommendations up to the Electoral Commission to be tabled in the meeting. It is because we are still on the ground, trying to facilitate all the necessary documentation relating to audit before we could then provide a recommendation to the Electoral Commission on the way forward for this.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Obviously, when you made your submissions to the Fiji Law Reform Commission, you would not have had the advantage of an audit?

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- No, for the National Register of Voters.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, I think, just one suggestion that in future, when you do that budgeting, you spell it out because it is very difficult for us to understand what was happening.

I have one question. Why is it that you are thinking about getting rid of the results because people found it very handy. Was it because the way that it was because it is basically just reporting on what has been on the voting ballot, or because it did not allow you to adequately check what was going in?

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- Mr. Chairman, in terms of the FEO mobile App, we are not going to be using it for the upcoming general election because with the App, you have to be constantly uploading the results. So, it puts the pressure on our results team, which means that the process that they had initially initiated to have verifications, et cetera, have been compromised to ensure that we put results out on the mobile App. So, that is added pressure that is not needed for the upcoming general election.

The second part of it is the inclusivity. So, from the 2022 General Election review that we had looked at, some of the feedback from our stakeholders as well in terms of the mobile app was that it was causing confusion for them because sometimes, the app had different results, our website had different results, and our media stakeholders had different results.

We had introduced it for the 2022 General Election. We looked at how we were doing it in 2014 and 2018, so for the upcoming general election, we are anticipating bringing back the media centre. This media centre would then allow all our media stakeholders to be present in the centre, they get updates as to when the results come in from the National Result Centres and they already have the platform to disseminate the results to all Fijians.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Basically, you are going to give them more time to make sure that the results are correct, and you will not do the dissemination, but let them do the dissemination?

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- Yes.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I am interested to know what recommendations you are making in relation to No. 11 of the additional recommendations on campaign funding/expenditure. You said that you would make recommendations. Would you be in a position to tell us what kind of recommendations you are making, or is that becoming a bit too forward?

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- Just give me a second.

HON. J. USAMATE.- In the meantime, I will tell you why. We never want to have in this country what happens in the United States of America. In the USA, these people put so much campaign money into it by big corporates, and that influences the way things go. So, I just wanted to be sure that we can maintain things in this country, we do not go down that route so that whoever has the most money begins to determine what happens in the election.

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- Some of the amendments we had recommended in terms of No. 11, for instance, one is when we look at donations. Some international best practices, they look at campaign expenditure limits, et cetera, is the disclosures. For instance, any donation that is exceeding \$10,000 which is the limit at the moment, and you have to be a Fijian citizen, we had proposed, that those who exceed \$10,000 must disclose it within 10 days of providing that donation, and this is because of international best practices. We are basically just looking at transparency.

HON. J. USAMATE.- In that recommendation, you have removed....

MS. A. MATAICIWA.-Yes. These are some of the feedback that we had received when we had meetings with our political parties and our other stakeholders as well. What we have done, for instance, one of the recommendations was on this. What we did was we looked at international best practices to see how we could put it into Fiji's context.

At the moment for Fiji, it is just 10,000 limit, but when we look at other international best practices, they do have some that exceed certain limit. But then there is also a transparency provision where they have to declare within 10 days instead of waiting for the audit of the account at a later month.

We did consider some of the recommendations from our stakeholders to some extent, but at the same time, we also look at international best practices. Those that are beyond, we did not put forth but those that we saw was of convenient and of best practice to other countries are the ones that we had recommended.

HON. J. USAMATE.- It makes me very nervous because I know in the election in the United States, one guy put \$270 million into one candidate, and he was basically doing control of government for a few months. That is not something you want us to have.

I have another question; you mentioned that you used to have a separation of the Secretary for the Electoral Commission and the SOE. I can understand the benefits of having either one, I mean, there are pros of this one. From your experience, has it worked equally well when they were separated, as opposed to being the same person because obviously, the SOE has that technical knowledge of how things operate because the SOE is the operational arm of the Commission. Are you more comfortable with the other, or are they equally the same in terms of your assessment?

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- In the previous one, they had the legal team that held the role as secretary, which meant I was a secretary whilst the SOE was doing his role. However, to look at the two different categories of secretariat work, when the legal team was secretary to the Electoral Commission, there was a lot of back and forth between the SOE and the Electoral Commission Team, apart from the scheduled meetings, ad hoc meetings, because information they needed was not there on time because the secretariat had to go to the SOE and get the information.

However, when we had the SOE as secretary, it is more convenient because some of the information that is required by the Electoral Commission is provided right there and then by the SOE, who also sits in the meeting. So, timewise and in terms of decision-making, it is more convenient to have the SOE as the secretariat, compared to having the legal team.

HON. S. NAND.- Mr. Chairman, through you, as the regulating authority and the custodians of the Electoral Commission, how can FEO and Electoral Commission ensure that political parties do not oversell to the people of Fiji to benefit from their votes and later on end up under-delivering? How can the Electoral Commission and the FEO assist the voters on that?

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- For us, at the FEO and the Electoral Commission, our mandate is to conduct elections and provide all the basic necessary awareness that needs to be provided to all Fijians. Their decision on who to cast a ballot on is solely on them, but we have to ensure that information that are disseminated either from the Electoral Commission through the FEO, or even through our stakeholders, is not only consistent but also relate to the existing electoral laws. At the end of the day, that is the empowerment that we can give to our Fijians. However, the decision-making in terms of casting their ballot and how they sway their decision towards it, is solely on them. We ensure that they are empowered enough to understand their right to vote and the importance of them voting.

HON. S. NAND.- I understand that you cannot control what the political party says to the voter. Is there a programme of educating the voters on how to assess the proposals and see that what is being sold to them is realistic or what is being sold to them is high up in the clouds and never due?

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- Sir, section 115 talks about how the CSOs can come up with these different events to empower the voters, but then there is only one restriction there - if we had approved.

What normally happens previously it that we would check all their documents, et cetera, but previously in the three General Elections, we were just concentrating on how to vote. Through section 115, it is just how to vote contents that are going out but now, we are also into the importance of voting and empowering our Fijians. That is why we had recommended for section 115 to have rules and regulations - the guidelines that will be approved by the Electoral Commission.

With that said, when we look at the voters and if there is any event, at the moment, to empower them in terms of your question, we have not gone to that extent yet with our stakeholders. At the

moment, we are looking at just empowering on the importance of them to come and why it is important for them to vote.

However, I am pretty sure as we move towards the upcoming general election, I mean, if we look at it, we are just eight months away from 24th June, which is not long, which means we also have our CSOs that are also preparing some of these contents surrounding what you have raised. When we do receive that, the voters will then be empowered through that, but at this stage, we have not come across any yet, but we anticipate that we will receive that as we get nearer to the general election.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Just a question on the recommendation that came from MOG – Recommendation 15, which was specifically to do with women's representation. Just recently, that was a discussion that we had about the lack of female representation in parliament.

I see from your response, and you basically said that you prioritised strengthening your relationships with all stakeholders. The question that was being asked from us is, what have you specifically done to target more female or women participation in the elections as candidates because we seem to have a very small percentage in terms of representation and even candidates that stand here. What are the actual issues? What did you do since the 2020 Elections in order to enhance that?

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- Mr. Chairman, in our recommendation to the Fiji Law Reform Commission, we had drafted an amendment to the Electoral Act. We had proposed for the party list of candidates that are submitted to us during candidate nomination to have, at least, 30 percent of each gender on it. What we have seen when we look at women participation, especially for women candidates, when we look at the existing political parties, some have women win but we see that even the empowerment of women in the party itself is not really present.

When we look at the previous party lists that have been submitted in the past three General Elections, we looked at recommendations on how to improve women participation, instead of going for major legislative changes, we had recommended that perhaps, we go through the party list and see if it does work before we touch into the TSM section. That is something we had recommended, but at the end of the day, it will be up to those who accept the recommendation or not.

We got this recommendation after discussions not only with those affected by this provision but also by looking at international best practices. We thought that we might just look at the party list first, we see the gender balance from that area, put a quota to it, and if it gets accepted, we try it out in the next general election and if not, we will see how we improve from there on.

Other than that, when we are invited to events through femLINKPacific and FWRM, we have potential candidates who are present who also raised their concerns. What we emphasise to them is that we can be empowering them all from the electoral processes and how to vote, but at the end of the day it comes back to the party that they choose and what is in the party itself.

We will see if it does come through. If it does, then it is something we can test on. If not, maybe for the next amendments to the law, we can see what else is available there.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- On the domestic observer recommendation, I think the recommendation was to consider how domestic observers and other international people can be incorporated into the future process. Do you find that it is going to be a difficult exercise, bearing in mind that literally in Fiji, we have such a small population? Having domestic observers may mean that whoever is going

to be an observer is going to be classified as aligning with someone or another because of that. Is that not a difficulty?

In that case, should it not be something that perhaps, the FEO and Electoral Commission can say, 'no'? For us, until we get to a level of population where we know, or a perception of that independence or the other, it might be something that does not. I do not agree with the domestic observer, because I still do not believe that we are in a position to say that we can provide a perception of a completely independent observer.

MS. A. MATAICIWA.-The current provision in the law opens it up; it does not restrict. If you look at the past three General Elections, we had one under the Multinational Observer Group. For the upcoming general election, it is something the Minister responsible for election would have to decide on. We do understand there are some keen domestic observers, and we also understand the need to have international observers. If we look at countries that are more mature democracies, they do not even need observers but for us, we will not restrict because the law is open as such.

What we have done instead, and what is reflected in our strategic plan is, if there is a possibility in the upcoming general election that we could or might have domestic observers - instead of waiting for the announcement, what we can do now, leading up to the upcoming general election, is empower our NGOs - all the potential ones. We are pretty sure that some of these domestic observers will be from the CSO. We have been doing empowering, in the sense that they understand the electoral cycle, the electoral processes, the principles surrounding it, and then we zoom into Fiji and its electoral processes. If there is a chance for them, at least, they are not left behind or overwhelmed by the process but have some standard of understanding to enable them to become domestic observers.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- One last one from me - in support of what honourable Usamate mentioned earlier on with respect to the election expenditure. For future reference, I think for purposes of any Committee sitting and having a look at it, it might be best served if how you have explained it is actually how it is written, so that when we are reading it, we know exactly what is where. We could not figure it out and it seems to have been done a bit of a hurried exercise and just gotten something together, but we go through a thing with a fine-tooth comb. Just a word of advice, maybe, it needs to be broken down properly because this is an extremely important report as to whether it is international expenditure or whether it is an expenditure, whichever way that you spell it. It would be grateful if you could actually do that in your next report.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, you had a lot of good things that was discussed in the additional recommendations. We see institutional continuity in terms of appointing the commissioners. But as you have pointed out, a lot of these things relate to constitutional provisions. That particular one, and then under the legal framework where legislative stability, all that result around constitutional provisions. Even the next one, early disclosure, and even the last one, I think, for the enhancing of voter participation.

There is quite a few things here that are impinging on constitutional changes. I am just wondering, are these sorts of things already been made known to the Electoral Law Reform Commission? Are they also taking into account those sorts of things, or where are these things being aired, or is it just in this report? And if it needs to be aired, should it be this Committee or has it already gone to that Commission? These things may require constitutional amendments.

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- It has already been reflected in our recommendations and also reflected in the report. So, we have reflected it to the Fiji Law Reform Commission. We do not have any objection if you also reflect it since it is in the report.

MR. U. RATUVILI.- Just to assist, the report that the Fiji Law Reform Commissioners have given to the honourable Minister for Justice and Acting Attorney-General contains basically like a wish list - the ideal, also flagging the areas which has constitutional implications. So, this is the ideal, this is what we can do under the current constitutional framework, and this would be something that requires constitutional reform.

To that end, the Commission has also alerted the honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Justice after the decision of the Supreme Court that we will need a referendum - Act to be passed, because without that, any constitutional amendment process will be incomplete.

You might have the numbers in Parliament, but it requires a constitutional endorsement, a referendum endorsement basically by the people. And the Constitution is very clear - a referendum must be conducted under an Act. So, it is basically all these discussions would be academic without a referendum Act to allow the constitutional process to be complete.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Chairman, just on Recommendation No. 4, I think the MOG had said that we should consider the appropriateness of severe criminal penalties in the electoral legislation, including the Electoral Act on voting, and whether the desire to deter criminal conduct ultimately diminishes the public confidence.

I see in your answer you basically said that we have proposed amendments to all offences to be consolidated offences and harmonise the penalties, but the issue that the MOG has put forward has actually not been addressed. In my opinion, in terms of whether the severe criminal penalties has an effect of diminishing public confidence in the Electoral Commission and the FEO. It also has other little quirky things, like people not wanting to take part in Elections because of penalties. For a minor thing, you are actually getting a severe criminal penalty. So, can I just get a little bit on the portion that you have actually said that you had proposed amendments to offer. Was that the only thing that you did, to say that we can harmonize it and consolidate it? Did you look at the aspect of some things do not need to be criminalised?

I say this on the back of us having conversations with institutions offshore, similar with legislations, where they look at it and say, "Alright, it does not need to be criminal offence." You can have a fine, it may be inadvertent, or whatever it is but were those things looked at?

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- Yes, when we looked at the three electoral laws, we basically looked at each provision. So, currently there is either \$10,000, 5 years or both or \$50,000, 10 years or both, and it is standard all throughout. What we have done when we looked at each electoral offence was to categorize it whether it is a corrupt electoral practice which requires hefty penalty.

For instance, if you look at some of the electoral offences, even if a voter takes the ballot paper out of the polling station, there is already a \$10,000 fine, five years, or both. What we have done is, we looked at it and we categorized it, "Alright, this one could only just be a fine or a warning to this", so each provision was critically analysed and categorized. However, once it goes through and we receive it, then we will provide awareness to those different offences, but we do understand that currently it is excessive. So, what we have done is to try to minimize it and make it customized to Fiji. It also is across the board of international best practice as well.

HON. F.S. KOYA.-The danger is that it becomes recognised, that is the point.

HON. S. NAND.- Mr. Chairman, we have around 60 percent of our voters who have come forward and participated in the election. We still have to work on that remaining 40 percent. What activities are being planned between now and the election to encourage or entice them to come and participate and have a say in their vote?

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- Mr. Chairman, we have some activities that are currently being implemented. We did have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was signed with the Ministry of Employment, as well as with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. That had allowed us to basically work together and look at our Fijian diaspora.

One of the things that we did lack previously was, for instance, our PALM Scheme as well as New Zealand RSE Scheme. They left our shores without even having any electoral knowledge. What we have done now weekly there are Fijians living either for PALM Scheme in Australia or RSE for New Zealand. So, we have a slot that have been allocated to us for debrief sessions.

We have weekly sessions and, on these sessions, we do advise them of the methods that are available to them. One of the things that we did find out was that those leaving through this Scheme were not aware of the postal applications that they have to complete. Most have the idea that they are in overseas, they automatically receive their postal application, but we have to take them through the process - the method of voting that is available to them.

Secondly, is the change of their address. Some of them are going for three to four years contract, so we also provide them with an opportunity to update their voter card as well. Those that we admit start through these debriefs. We have teams and at the end of September, October, right up to November, they will basically be serving our Fijians in Australia, New Zealand, Tuvalu, American Samoa, Samoa, Cook Islands as well as USA, basically to provide them with electoral services. For our Fijian diaspora, this is the first phase, to get them to register. We are going with the Ministry of Immigration as well, which is quite convenient, especially when it is one of the requirements for Fijian diaspora.

The first phase is to get them to be registered, get their cards updated, or get their address corrected. The second phase, which would take place in the first or second quarter of next year, is awareness on the postal methods available to them and what they need to do. The third phase would be the actual postal. Now, that is the empowering we have for our Fijian diaspora.

Others include our community engagement advocate launched on 14th October. We realised in the previous three General Elections that we did not tap into the already structured community groups out there in the nation. These community election advocates are those already influential in the community, for instance, the women leaders, the men's group, as well as youth groups. Currently, they are being trained, and they are being empowered on understanding the electoral processes. At the same time, they will be provided with election information that would allow them to go into different communities and have discussions on election - basically just empower the Fijians to come in to vote next year. We have others as well that have been implemented.

Apart from these, we have our Year 10 curriculum as well. This is targeting our new eligible voters in schools. We also have a school election toolkit, just to get them to have a sense of how elections are run - the Members of Parliament, general election, so that they get a feel of it as they prepare for the upcoming general election.

We have launched our mascot. We call our translucent mascot FEO, which is a short form for Fijian electoral officer. The FEO is going to come to life next year. We use FEO as someone relatable to the community and just get them to be engaged.

We also had been part of the festivals in the different Divisions in which we had provided our electoral services and awareness during the Hibiscus, as well as the other festive events that had taken place so far.

HON. S. NAND.- Apart from all those good initiatives which you have just mentioned, do you think we can also have some sort of reward system to entice them to come in and get record stations?

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- For voters, Mr. Chairman?

HON. S. NAND.- Yes.

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- A reward that we do not want to be giving to voters just to force them to come in. What we want to do, which we are doing now, is empower them and get them to understand the importance of coming in to vote. There is merchandise we do give out, but this merchandise is more of an empowerment for them and understanding their right to vote rather than something to drag them into the polling station to vote.

HON. S. NAND.- It was more like a stick and a carrot approach. So, spare the stick, dangle the carrot.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Just something on the line of the percentage of voters we will be seeing who are completely new in terms of the education process because as far as I understand, and you can correct me if I am wrong, there is no way anything new will happen in this coming election. Everything you are talking about in terms of recommendations, et cetera, is geared towards the next one, because there is a process that needs to happen before next year.

In order to ensure we have a very thorough participation, which is a sore thumb - it sticks out like a sore thumb when it comes to elections, have we targeted the younger population in schools who will end up being eligible to vote, and going out and making sure that they are educated enough with all those wonderful things that you are actually saying? That is an area that we think, if I remember correctly, there was a lack of younger participation in the last Elections.

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- Yes, there was lack of participation from our younger generation, one of which was those at the tertiary level, where they did not update their address. When we do have a chance to go and provide awareness at universities, which we have been doing through invites, these are some of the things that we bring to their attention. We also have invites from different provincial groups in the universities.

One thing that we had lacked in the past three General Elections was our collaboration with our stakeholders. We had run our own lane and then we left them, but then we expected them to understand the electoral processes. However, what we have done now is through collaboration, we are engaging not only on election year, but even way before, which is what we are doing now. When we are invited to that sort of events, we do get them to understand the importance of changing their address and updating it, and we also provide the electoral processes right there and then so that they update it.

Another phase would be to get them to the election to actually vote. For the schools, what we have done last year and what we hope to do next year through approval from Cabinet is our Year 10 curriculum. We already have a Year 10 curriculum but when we had placed it into the Ministry of Education, it was more of a check box - just leave it there, and that is it. What we have done now is we have gathered all the Year 10 Social Science teachers who were delivering that curriculum, as well as the students' feedback, those who have gone through this curriculum.

They have actually allowed us to review our Year 10 curriculum, which we did this year, basically just making it more readable and more understanding of the electoral processes. We do hope that once Cabinet approves it, it will be implemented next year.

Also, the school election toolkit. This is one of the initiatives that we had introduced last year. Basically, we provide all the election materials that you see at the polling stations to schools that intend to do elections for their prefects or their headboys or headgirls. We get them to go through the entire electoral processes from candidate nomination, campaigns, have guidelines for them, right up to polling and then counting. When they go through that, we get feedback from the teachers and students which is something new and exciting to them and they want to try it out when they do come and vote. This is something that we, as an election management body, need to continue to push for as we come to the general election next year - just getting our Fijians informed through various areas.

We are also targeting our young voters through youth groups and have engagements with youth groups in which we empower youth leaders to go out to empower their youth members. This was something that we never did previously, and even with community election advocates, we are getting in the youth as well.

One thing we had learned which is still existing in Fiji is that when we put all the three categories - the men, women and youth, together in one room, not all of them are able to voice their concerns. This is something that was raised when we initially did our workshop that consisted of these three categories.

We looked at administrative convenience - get them all there, get their feedback and come back. However, one feedback from our youth was that they were not able to raise their concerns because the elders were in the room and they felt a bit nervous. We have learned from that, and we have improved on it.

We started categorizing and now we are doing target audience events, which we hope come the next general election, we will see the numbers and the turnout.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, SOE.

Honourable Members, since there is no further question, I have only one question so saving it for last. I beg your indulgence, SOE and your team. I have seen you given a lot of submissions to the Fiji Law Reform Commission with respect to the amendment of the electoral laws. My question rests on the idea of having more than one polling day, basically this is to capture the words that you have just uttered - the right to vote. It is a civic duty of a person. Most of the times, in the previous Elections, people were going to the wrong stations, as what was told in the ID, which is not their fault. It was the registration of the FEO's fault.

From your experience, would it be a good idea to have two or three days of election just to capture the low voter turnout, probably we can capture some who are not supposed to vote here they can make their way to where they were supposed to vote, something like that. Is that possible, even

though if it may need a constitutional amendment? In your opinion, with one day voting, it is a very big job, what about the idea of two or three days - would you be open to that?

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- Mr. Chairman, in terms of voting, if we look at our current arrangements, we do put more emphasis on the one day election but if we look at it, we have pre-poll as well which is two weeks before the election date in which they also go into election in the remote areas. Even though we emphasis on a one-day election, however, on the ground we are looking at the two weeks of pre-poll and then one election date.

If there is an intention to increase the number of days, then we also have to consider the budget side of things because that would be money allocated for the other extra days. So far, what we have seen is that one day is sufficient. We have pre-polls but what we need to improve on is basically from our end as the election management body and the awareness bit of it. When you look at the three General Elections, one thing that we did lack in was having that collaboration with the stakeholders to get them to understand where they need to be and when they should come into vote. So, if we are able to fix that, then that is something that we can work towards, which we are working towards for the upcoming general election.

Most of the things that happened was because the voters did not know because we did not have that communication channelled down to them for them to understand. For instance, for the pre-poll, we had schedules two weeks before election day, for them to be casting their ballots but when our team came in, they were not there. They were out fishing, out in farm because they basically were just not aware. So, these are some of the places that we want to basically right the wrong, before we consider what you have suggested.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, I like the idea that you have that a lot of the tertiary students need to be able to change their address to be moved to a station that is supposed to where they are. I think, that will capture a significant portion of them. They might still not capture those that are coming and going in terms of short courses, et cetera.

I am just wondering, I think you did an exercise in the last General Election that people who were registered overseas, you set up a polling booth for them to be able to vote here in-country. Am I correct? Would you be considering doing something like that for tertiary students, especially for these young, so that they know no matter what happens, they can still vote? Something along that line. Is that something under consideration?

MS. A. MATAICIWA.- Mr. Chairman, for the overseas polling station, we did set up one at our St. Stephen's building for those who were in the country and did not apply for postal. They were able to walk in and cast their ballots.

Currently, our law assigns our voters to their polling station, so the polling station they are assigned to is according to the address reflected in their voter card. That is an emphasis for them to update their residential addresses.

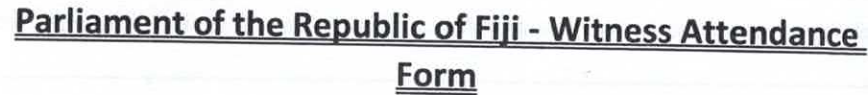
It is just a matter of us just informing them of the place they need to go and vote, which then brings me back to one of the further discussions in the recommendations on the announcement of the election dates. It is reflected in the recommendation, and if Fijians are aware of the election date, they would be able to prepare themselves. Most of the time, even in the feedback that we have received, they just did not know when the election was. This is something beyond our control as we just know the legislative timelines for the election. If they are made aware of the election date, they will be able to plan themselves, and who knows, the numbers can then improve from there.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Since there are no other questions or supplementary questions to the SOE, that concludes our public submission for this afternoon.

I take this time to thank you, SOE, and your team, specifically the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission. Thank you very much, Sir, for having yourself this afternoon.

Honourable Members, we are adjourned until Wednesday.

The Committee adjourned at 4.02 p.m.



Attendee's Details : Please enter/select your details in the below fields.

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