

CRIMINAL RECORDS BILL 2025
(BILL NO. 41 OF 2025)

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BILL NO. 41 OF 2025**A BILL**

FOR AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR SPENT CONVICTIONS OF REHABILITATED PERSONS, EXPUNGED HISTORICAL CONVICTIONS, EXPIATION OF FIXED PENALTY OFFENCES, SEALING AND MANAGEMENT OF CRIMINAL RECORDS AND FOR RELATED MATTERS

ENACTED by the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji—

PART 1—PRELIMINARY*Short title and commencement*

1.—(1) This Act may be cited as the Criminal Records Act 2025.

(2) This Act comes into force on a date or dates appointed by the Minister by notice in the Gazette.

Interpretation

2.—(1) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires—

“applicant” means—

- (a) for the purposes of Part 3, a person referred to in section 20(1) who makes an application under that subsection;

(b) for the purposes of Part 4—

- (i) an eligible person referred to in section 28(1) who makes an application under that subsection; or
- (ii) a kin representative referred to in section 28(2) who makes an application under that subsection in respect of an eligible person who is deceased;

“child” in relation to a person convicted of an offence, means a person who is under the age of 18 years at the time of the commission of the offence;

“Child Justice Court” means the court established under section 34 of the Child Justice Act 2024;

“Constitution” means Constitution of the Republic of Fiji;

“conviction” has the meaning given in section 3;

“conviction record holder” means a Government office that holds or has access to a public record that contains information in relation to a spent conviction, an expunged conviction or an expiated fixed penalty offence or lists spent convictions, expunged convictions or expiated fixed penalty offences;

“criminal record” in relation—

(a) to a question asked of a person, means any—

- (i) charges laid against him or her that have resulted in a conviction;
- (ii) convictions recorded against him or her;
- (iii) sentences imposed on him or her; and
- (iv) orders imposed on him or her as a result of a conviction; and

(b) to a request for disclosure or an obligation to conceal, means any public record including an electronic record, that is kept by, or on behalf of, the State of—

- (i) charges that result in conviction;
- (ii) convictions entered (including, without limitation, any item on a list of previous convictions);
- (iii) sentences imposed (including, without limitation, any item on a list of previous sentences); or
- (iv) orders imposed on an offender as a result of a conviction;

“custodial sentence” has the meaning given in section 4;

“customary right” means a right of an indigenous person, established by iTaukei, Rotuman or Banaban customs, to hunt, fish or collect fruit and vegetables growing wild or for domestic use in customary land or area that gives effect to the communal ownership of iTaukei, Rotuman or Banaban lands;

“*de facto* relationship” has the same meaning as in the Succession, Probate and Administration Act 1970;

“eligible applicant” means—

- (a) a person who is the subject of a decision under section 37(1) to refuse an application; or
- (b) a kin representative of a person referred to in paragraph (a);

“eligible person” means—

- (a) a person referred to in section 28(1); or
- (b) a person who was convicted of a historical offence and is deceased;

“expiated fixed penalty offence” means a fixed penalty offence that is expiated in accordance with Part 5;

“expunge” has the meaning given in section 6;

“expunged conviction” means a conviction that has become an expunged conviction under section 35(3) or section 40(2)(a) or (c);

“Fiji Police clearance certificate” means a certificate relating to the criminal record of a person issued by the Fiji Police Force to a person or an organisation on authorisation of the person;

“Fiji Police Force” has the meaning given in the Police Act 1965;

“fine” has the meaning given in the Sentencing and Penalties Act 2009;

“fixed penalty conviction” means a fixed penalty notice that takes effect as a conviction under a law of Fiji;

“fixed penalty notice” means a notice in respect of a fixed penalty offence served or to be served in accordance with an Act or subsidiary legislation;

“foreign law” means a law of a country other than Fiji;

“governing principles” means the principles set out in Part 2;

“Government office” has the meaning given in the Public Records Act 1969;

“historical conviction” mean a conviction recorded against a person for a historical offence;

“historical offence” means—

- (a) a homosexual offence; or
- (b) a larceny offence;

“homosexual offence” means—

- (a) an offence against section 175(a) and (c) or section 177 of the Penal Code, as in force at any time by which any form of homosexual conduct, whether consensual or non-consensual or penetrative or non-penetrative, could be punished, whether or not heterosexual conduct could also be punished by the offence;
- (b) an offence of aiding, abetting, counselling or procuring the commission of an offence referred to in paragraph (a);
- (c) an offence of inciting to commit an offence referred to in paragraph (a);

“indigenous person” means a member of the aboriginal people indigenous to Fiji;

“juvenile court” means a juvenile court established under section 16 of the Juveniles Act 1973;

“kin representative” in relation to a deceased person who was convicted of a historical offence, means any of the following—

- (a) spouse;
- (b) child;
- (c) adopted child including a child who is not the subject of a final adoption order under the Adoption Act 2020 but who is under the supervision of the person;
- (d) parent or step-parent;
- (e) sibling or step-sibling;
- (f) grandparent;
- (g) grandchild;
- (h) uncle or aunt;
- (i) nephew or niece; and
- (j) headman of a *mataqali*;

“larceny offence” means any of the following offences as in force at any time—

- (a) a larceny offence against sections 275, 276, 277 and 278 of the Penal Code;
- (b) an offence against sections 280, 281, 282, and 283 of the Penal Code;
- (c) an offence of soliciting or inciting or attempting to procure another to commit an offence referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b);

“law enforcement agency” means the Fiji Police Force or any other agency that has power to investigate an indictable offence;

“*mataqali*” means the primary social division in Fiji, larger than i tokatoka and smaller than yavusa;

“Mercy Commission” means the Mercy Commission continued under section 119(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji;

“Permanent Secretary” means the permanent secretary responsible for justice;

“public record” has the meaning given in the Public Records Act 1969;

“rehabilitation period” has the meaning given in section 7;

“rehabilitation report” means a report prepared in accordance with section 23(2);

“seal” means to apply the actions required under section 58(3) to a public record that contains information in relation to an expunged conviction or lists an expunged conviction;

“serious conviction” means —

- (a) a conviction for which the sentence imposed includes a custodial sentence of more than 30 months;
- (b) a conviction of a person for a sexual offence; or
- (c) a conviction of a person for a serious violence offence;

“serious conviction order” means an order made by the Magistrates Court that a serious conviction be spent and that is made under section 26;

“serious violence offence” means —

- (a) murder;
- (b) manslaughter;
- (c) an offence against any of the following sections of the Crimes Act 2009 —
 - (i) section 253 (disabling in order to commit an offence);
 - (ii) section 254 (stupefying in order to commit an offence);
 - (iii) section 255 (acts intended to cause grievous harm or prevent arrest);
 - (iv) section 258 (grievous harm);
 - (v) section 259 (attempting to injure by explosive substances);
 - (vi) section 260 (maliciously administering poison with intent to harm);

- (vii) section 277 (serious assaults);
- (viii) section 279 (kidnapping);
- (ix) section 280 (kidnapping or abducting in order to murder);
- (x) section 281 (kidnapping or abducting with intent to confine person);
- (xi) section 282 (kidnapping or abducting in order to subject person to grievous harm, slavery etc.)
- (xii) section 362 (arson);
- (d) an offence or an element of which is an intention to commit an offence of a kind referred to in this definition;
- (e) an offence of conspiracy to commit, incitement to commit or attempting to commit an offence referred to in this definition;
- (f) an offence, whether committed in Fiji or elsewhere, the necessary elements of which consist of elements that constitute an offence of a kind referred to in this definition;

“sexual offence” means—

- (a) any of the following offences—
 - (i) an offence against Part 12B of the Crimes Act 2009;
 - (ii) an offence against Part 13 of the Crimes Act 2009;
 - (iii) an offence an element of which involves—
 - (A) a person engaging in sexual activity;
 - (B) a person taking part in a sexual act;
 - (C) a commercial sexual service; or
 - (D) a sexual performance involving a child;
 - (iv) an offence an element of which involves—
 - (A) an intention that any of the conduct referred to in subparagraph (iii) is to occur; or
 - (B) soliciting, procuring, enabling or threatening any of the conduct referred to in subparagraph (iii) may occur;
 - (v) an offence an element of which involves child abuse material;
 - (vi) an offence an element of which involves indecency;
 - (vii) an offence of attempting to commit, or of incitement or conspiracy to commit, an offence referred to in subparagraph (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v) or (vi);

- (b) in determining whether an offence at common law is a sexual offence, it does not matter that the offence has since been abolished;
- (c) in determining whether an offence against an enactment is a sexual offence, it does not matter that the enactment has since been repealed; and
- (d) in determining whether an offence is a sexual offence, it does not matter that the offence is described in this definition—
 - (i) differently from how it is described in the enactment or common law that establishes the offence; or
 - (ii) by reference to an enactment that was not in operation on the date on which the offence is alleged to have been committed;

“spent conviction” means a conviction that has become spent due to the operation of Part 3;

“spent conviction order” means an order made under section 26;

“spouse” of a person means—

- (a) an adult person to whom the person is married; or
- (b) an adult person to whom the person is not married but with whom the person is in a *de facto* relationship as a couple where one or each of them provides personal or financial commitment and support of a domestic nature for the material benefit of the other, irrespective of their genders and whether or not they are living under the same roof, but does not include a person who provides domestic support and personal care to the person—
 - (i) for fee or reward; or
 - (ii) on behalf of another person or an organisation (including a government, a government agency, a body corporate or a charitable or benevolent organisation);

“*vanua*” means the land, region and place to which an indigenous person belongs; and

“young offender” means a person who at the time of being sentenced is under the age of 24 years.

Meaning of conviction

3.—(1) Subject to subsection (2), in this Act “conviction” means—

- (a) a finding of guilt by a court, tribunal, a body or person exercising judicial functions for an offence—
 - (i) whether or not a conviction is recorded by the court; and
 - (ii) whether the offence is an indictable offence or a summary offence; or

(b) a fixed penalty conviction for an offence.

(2) In relation to a spent conviction, a “conviction” includes an offence against a foreign law that, if it had been committed in Fiji, would have constituted an offence against a law of Fiji.

Meaning of custodial sentence

4.—(1) For the purposes of this Act, a sentence imposed on a person for a conviction includes a “custodial sentence” if the sentence is or includes an order that the person—

- (a) serves a term of imprisonment;
- (b) in the case of a person who is a child, serve a term of detention under section 31 of the Juveniles Act 1973 in a place directed by the Minister responsible for welfare and the treatment of offenders or be held in custody in an approved rehabilitation centre under section 50(m)(i) of the Child Justice Act 2024; or
- (c) be confined in a mental hospital, prison, a declared mental health facility or other suitable place under the Criminal Procedure Act 2009.

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), a sentence that is or includes an order referred to in subsection (1)(a), (b) or (c) of that subsection is deemed to be a sentence that does not include a custodial sentence if the length of the custodial sentence served is zero days.

(3) If an aggregate sentence that includes a custodial sentence of a particular length is imposed on a person under section 30(3) of the Juveniles Act 1973, section 50(m) of the Child Justice Act 2024 or section 17 of the Sentencing and Penalties Act 2009, each conviction to which the aggregate sentence relates is deemed to have a sentence that includes a custodial sentence of that length.

(4) For the purposes of this Act, the length of a custodial sentence is to be determined in accordance with section 5.

Determining the length of custodial sentence

5.—(1) The length of a custodial sentence included in a sentence imposed on a person is, subject to this section, the length of time that the person is liable under that sentence—

- (a) to be imprisoned;
- (b) to be detained in a place directed by the Minister responsible for welfare or committed to prison in accordance with the Juveniles Act 1973;
- (c) to be held in custody in an approved rehabilitation centre in accordance with the Child Justice Act 2024; or
- (d) to be confined in a mental hospital, prison, a declared mental health facility or other suitable place for safe custody in accordance with the Criminal Procedure Act 2009.

(2) The length of a custodial sentence includes any part of the custodial sentence during which the person is released on parole but does not include any period to which subsection (3) applies.

(3) For the purposes of determining the length of a custodial sentence, a custodial sentence does not include any period—

(a) where the sentence is required to be served other than under subsection (1); or

(b) where the sentence lapses without imprisonment or detention,

and that is treated by the sentence as time served.

(4) A custodial sentence that is served concurrently with another term of imprisonment or detention imposed for another conviction does not reduce the length of the custodial sentence.

Meaning of expunge

6. For the purposes of this Act, to expunge a conviction is—

(a) to permanently seal any public record of the conviction of a person for a historical offence; and

(b) to make lawful any claim or statement by a person that he or she has not been convicted of a historical offence.

Meaning of rehabilitation period

7.—(1) In this Act, “rehabilitation period” means—

(a) a period of 4 years where—

(i) a person who has a conviction for one or more offences; and

(ii) a custodial sentence was not imposed in respect of the conviction;

(b) a period of 7 years where—

(i) a person who has a conviction for one or more offences; and

(ii) a custodial sentence of up to 30 months was imposed in respect of the conviction; and

(c) a period of 10 years where a person who has a serious conviction for one or more offences.

(2) For the purposes of this section, the rehabilitation period for a conviction for an offence against a foreign law is deemed to be the rehabilitation period specified in subsection (1) for a conviction for the offence under the law of Fiji that corresponds (or most closely corresponds) to that conviction.

Objectives

8. The objectives of this Act are to—

(a) provide for governing principles that apply to the functions and powers under this Act;

- (b) to provide for certain convictions to become spent automatically, spent on the expiry of a rehabilitation period or by force of a court order;
- (c) to provide for historical convictions to be expunged;
- (d) to confer on the Mercy Commission the authority to review a decision to refuse an application to expunge historical convictions;
- (e) to provide for the effect of a spent conviction, an expunged conviction or an expiated fixed penalty offence;
- (f) to provide for limitations and exceptions to the collection, use and disclosure of a spent conviction of a person for certain purposes such as the administration of justice or the performance of statutory functions;
- (g) to provide for the sealing of public records of expunged convictions; and
- (h) to make provision for spent convictions, expunged historical convictions and expiated fixed penalty offences in relation to Fiji Police clearance certificates.

Act to bind the State

9. This Act binds the State.

Application of Act

10.—(1) This Act applies to a conviction for an offence to which Part 3 applies or a historical offence, irrespective of when the offence is committed or the conviction is recorded or findings of guilt are made.

(2) Part 4 does not limit or affect the application of Part 3 to a person who has a conviction.

PART 2—GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

Governing principles

11.—(1) This Part sets out the governing principles that apply to this Act.

(2) Any person who performs any function or exercises any power under this Act must do so in a manner that promotes the governing principles.

Rehabilitation principle

12. The rehabilitation of a person who has been convicted of an offence, is to be promoted and respected and the person is to be supported as a valued member of the community.

Forgiveness principle

13. The forgiveness by victims, families, members of community, *mataqali* and *vanua* of a person who has been convicted of an offence is to be recognised as important for the person to change and be rehabilitated.

Respect principle

14. A person who has been convicted of an offence and attempts to change and be rehabilitated so as to be a valued member of the community is to be supported and respected.

Young person principle

15. The opportunity for a young person to learn from being convicted of an offence and change his or her life is to be promoted and supported, including by providing opportunities for a fresh start to engage in education and employment.

Second chance principle

16. A person who has been convicted of an offence and engages in the process of rehabilitation is to be given a second chance to be a valued member of the community through education and employment.

PART 3—SPENT CONVICTIONS

*Division 1—Convictions spent automatically**Convictions spent with immediate effect*

17.—(1) Subject to subsection (2), a person convicted for an offence against any law of Fiji or foreign law by a person becomes spent on the day on which the person is convicted if—

- (a) a finding of guilt is made by a court without recording a conviction;
- (b) the conviction is a qualified finding of guilt by reason of the person being found to be unfit to plead or establish a defence under law related to the person's mental impairment or a finding under a foreign law that corresponds;
- (c) the conviction, including a serious conviction, is for an offence committed when the person was under the age of 15 years;
- (d) the only penalty imposed on conviction is a fine that is less than \$10,000;
- (e) the only penalty imposed on conviction is a fine imposed by a juvenile court, a Child Justice Court or a court of a country other than Fiji that corresponds to the children's jurisdiction; or
- (f) the conviction is a fixed penalty conviction or a conviction under a foreign law that corresponds to a fixed penalty conviction.

(2) If a court imposes a penalty with a condition attached to the conviction, the person's conviction does not become spent under this section until the person completes all conditions attached to the penalty.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (1)(c), a serious conviction includes a conviction under a foreign law that, if it had been imposed in Fiji, would have constituted a serious conviction.

Convictions spent on expiry of rehabilitation period

18. A conviction for an offence against a law of Fiji or a foreign law by a natural person become spent on the day on which the rehabilitation period for the conviction expires unless—

- (a) the conviction is a serious conviction; or

(b) section 17 applies to the conviction.

Commencement and recommencement of rehabilitation period

19.—(1) Subject to subsection (2), the rehabilitation period for a conviction commences on the day a court, a tribunal, a body or person, exercising judicial functions makes the finding of guilt that constitutes the conviction.

(2) If, after a rehabilitation period commences for a conviction of a person, (“first conviction”) a subsequent conviction of the person is made (“later conviction”), the rehabilitation period for the first conviction is deemed to run from the day that the later conviction is made unless—

- (a) the person is the subject of a later conviction that is a conviction—
 - (i) for which the only penalty imposed is an order to pay an amount as restitution or compensation;
 - (ii) for which no penalty is imposed; or
 - (iii) for which no conviction is recorded by the court, the tribunal or the body or person exercising judicial functions; or
- (b) the person is a young offender who is the subject of a later conviction—
 - (i) of a kind referred to in paragraph (a); or
 - (ii) for an offence where a conviction is recorded and it is not a serious conviction, and there is no more than one later conviction imposed on the young offender during the rehabilitation period.

Division 2—Serious convictions spent on spent conviction order

Application for spent conviction order

20.—(1) A person may apply to the Magistrates Court for a spent conviction order in relation to a serious conviction if—

- (a) at the time of being sentenced the person was under the age of 18 years;
- (b) the serious conviction was for a serious violence offence or a sexual offence and the sentence imposed for the offence did not include a custodial sentence; or
- (c) serious conviction was for any other offence for which the sentence imposed included a custodial sentence of not more than 5 years.

(2) A person must not apply for a spent conviction order under subsection (1) in relation to a serious conviction before the day on which the rehabilitation period for that serious conviction expires.

(3) A person may apply for a spent conviction order under subsection (1) in relation to more than one serious conviction imposed on the person.

Refusal to accept application

21. The Magistrates Court may refuse to accept an application under section 20 if the Court is satisfied that the application—

- (a) is vexatious;
- (b) is misconceived; or
- (c) does not comply with section 22.

Form and content of application

22.—(1) An application made under section 20 must be accompanied by the prescribed fee, made in writing and set out—

- (a) the full name of the applicant;
- (b) the serious conviction in relation to which the spent conviction order is sought;
- (c) information in support of the rehabilitation of the applicant; and
- (d) any prescribed information.

(2) The Magistrates Court may issue a written notice requiring an applicant to provide further information in support of the application and the application of the governing principles to his or her circumstances.

Court may order rehabilitation report

23.—(1) If the Magistrates Court accepts an application from a person for a spent conviction order, the court may order a rehabilitation report in respect of the applicant and adjourn the proceeding to enable the report to be prepared, before considering the application.

(2) If the Magistrates Court orders a rehabilitation report, it—

- (a) must be prepared by the Permanent Secretary;
- (b) must contain a report from Fiji Corrections Service on the conduct of the applicant during any term of imprisonment;
- (c) must contain a report from Fiji Corrections Service on any education, work or other activities undertaken by the applicant during the serving of a sentence imposed for the relevant serious conviction, as the case requires;
- (d) may contain a statutory declaration from community leaders or headman of a *mataqali* on the activities of the applicant during the rehabilitation period, as the case requires;
- (e) may contain a statutory declaration from any victim of the offence for which the serious conviction was imposed on the applicant, as the case requires; and
- (f) must contain any other prescribed information.

(3) A rehabilitation report must be filed with the Magistrates Court no later than the time directed by the court.

(4) The Permanent Secretary must, within a reasonable time before the hearing of the application is to take place, provide a copy of the report to—

- (a) the applicant;
- (b) the Attorney-General;
- (c) the Commissioner of Police; and
- (d) the Commissioner of the Fiji Corrections Service.

(5) The person may file with the Magistrates Court a notice of intention to dispute the whole or part of the rehabilitation report.

Attorney-General, Commissioner of Police and Commissioner of the Fiji Corrections Service submissions

24.—(1) A person who makes an application under section 20 must serve a copy of the application on—

- (a) the Attorney-General;
- (b) the Commissioner of Police; and
- (c) the Commissioner of the Fiji Corrections Service.

(2) The Attorney-General, the Commissioner of Police and the Commissioner of the Fiji Corrections Service may make a submission in respect of the serious conviction in relation to which the spent conviction order is sought.

(3) The Attorney-General, the Commissioner of Police and the Commissioner of the Fiji Corrections Service, before the expiry of a period of 28 days after being served a copy of the application under subsection (1), must give written notice to the Magistrates Court stating whether or not the Attorney-General, the Commissioner of Police or the Commissioner of the Fiji Corrections Service intend to make a submission.

Hearing to determine spent conviction order application

25.—(1) The Magistrates Court may hold a hearing to determine an application made under section 20 for a spent conviction order.

(2) A hearing must be closed to the public unless the Magistrates Court considers that the circumstances of the case justify the hearing being open to the public.

(3) The Magistrates Court must give written notice of the time, date and place of the hearing to the following persons—

- (a) the applicant;
- (b) the Attorney-General;
- (c) the Commissioner of Police; and
- (d) the Commissioner of the Fiji Corrections Service.

(4) If a hearing is closed to the public, the Magistrates Court must provide directions on which persons may be present at the hearing in addition to the persons specified in subsection (3).

(5) In a hearing to determine an application for a spent conviction order, the Magistrates Court—

- (a) is not bound by the rules of evidence and may inform itself in any way the Magistrates Court thinks fit; and
- (b) must act with regard to the substance of the application under section 20 and without regard to technicalities or legal forms that are not set out under this Act.

Magistrates Court may make spent conviction order

26.—(1) On an application under section 20, the Magistrates Court may order a serious conviction of a person in relation to which the application is made to become spent.

(2) In determining whether to make an order under subsection (1), the Magistrates Court must consider—

- (a) the rehabilitation report and the application of the governing principles to the circumstances of the applicant;
- (b) the nature, circumstances and seriousness of the offence to which the application relates;
- (c) the impact on any victim of the offence to which the application relates;
- (d) the personal circumstances of the applicant;
- (e) the age and maturity of the applicant when the offence was committed;
- (f) any demonstrated rehabilitation of the applicant;
- (g) any risk to public safety of making a spent conviction order for the serious conviction;
- (h) whether the exercise of a customary right is relevant to the circumstances of the applicant; and
- (i) any other matter that the Magistrates Court considers relevant.

(3) If the Magistrates Court makes or refuses to make an order under subsection (1), the Magistrates Court must send, as soon as practicable, a copy of the order or the refusal to the—

- (a) applicant;
- (b) Attorney-General;
- (c) Commissioner of Police; and
- (d) Commissioner of the Fiji Corrections Service.

Further application

27.—(1) Subject to the rules of court, a person may make a further application under section 20 despite having previously made an application under section 20.

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), the Magistrates Court may dismiss any further application that it thinks is frivolous, vexatious or an abuse of process.

PART 4—EXPUNGED CONVICTIONS*Division 1—Convictions for historical offences expunged on application**Application to Permanent Secretary and approved form*

28.—(1) A person who has been convicted of a historical offence is eligible to apply to the Permanent Secretary for the conviction to be expunged.

(2) A kin representative of a person who was convicted of a historical offence and is deceased may apply to the Permanent Secretary for the person's conviction to be expunged.

(3) An application must—

- (a) be in the form approved by the Minister;
- (b) be signed by the applicant;
- (c) include any identifying information approved by the Minister.

(4) The approved form must provide for the Permanent Secretary to be given the following information—

- (a) the full name of the eligible person, and any other names by which the eligible person is or has been known;
- (b) the residential address and telephone number of the applicant;
- (c) the date and place of birth of the eligible person;
- (d) the gender of the eligible person;
- (e) an address where notice and other documents addressed to the applicant may be served, which may be a residential or business address, a post office box or an email address;
- (f) the residential address of the eligible person at the time of the offence and of the conviction;
- (g) in relation to the historical offence to which the application relates, so far as known to the applicant—
 - (i) the name and location of the court by which the eligible person was convicted;
 - (ii) the date of the conviction;
 - (iii) the name of the offence; and
 - (iv) details of the offence and the offending conduct.

(5) The approved form must include provision for the applicant to—

- (a) authorise the conduct of a police clearance check on the eligible person in relation to the conviction to which the application relates; and
- (b) consent to the disclosure to the Permanent Secretary of any public records relating to that conviction created by a court, a tribunal, the Fiji Police Force or the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, whether held by that entity or by any other entity.

(6) An application may be accompanied by, statements by the applicant or written evidence given by any other person, including a person involved in the conduct constituting the offence, about matters which the Permanent Secretary must be satisfied to determine an application under section 28.

(7) The approved form and a list of the types of identifying information, must be published by the Permanent Secretary on a website maintained by the Ministry.

Permanent Secretary may require further information

29.—(1) If the Permanent Secretary receives an application that does not include all the information required by section 28, the Permanent Secretary may require the applicant to provide that information to the Permanent Secretary within 28 days or any longer period determined by the Permanent Secretary.

(2) Nothing in subsection (1) prevents the Permanent Secretary considering an application that does not include all the information required by section 28, if the Permanent Secretary chooses to do so.

Division 2—Determining application for expungement of convictions for historical offences

Consideration of application

30.—(1) The Permanent Secretary in considering an application—

- (a) must give proper consideration to any available record of the investigation of the historical offence, and of any proceedings relating to it, that the Permanent Secretary considers to be relevant;
- (b) must give proper consideration to any statement or written evidence given in accordance with section 28(6);
- (c) may request that any person or body give to the Permanent Secretary any relevant information about the offence, including any tribunal, court, the Fiji Police Force and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions;
- (d) may require the applicant to provide any further information that the Permanent Secretary thinks fit in the manner required by the Permanent Secretary within 28 days or any longer period that the Permanent Secretary determines; and

- (e) must give proper consideration to any further information that the Permanent Secretary has required the applicant to provide under section 29(1).

(2) The Permanent Secretary must not hold an oral hearing for the purposes of determining an application.

(3) The Permanent Secretary, as soon as practicable after obtaining the record of the investigation of the offence—

- (a) must give the applicant access to it, except so far as it contains information relating to the personal information of any person other than the applicant; and
- (b) must give written notice to the applicant that the Permanent Secretary will not proceed to determine the application until at least 28 days, or any longer period that the Permanent Secretary determines and specifies in the notice, have passed from the day on which the applicant is given access to the record.

(4) In subsection (3) “personal information” means information—

- (a) that identifies a person or discloses his or her address or location; or
- (b) from which a person’s identity, address or location can reasonably be determined.

Person or body must provide information required by Permanent Secretary

31.—(1) A person to whom a request for information is made by the Permanent Secretary under section 30(1)(c) must respond to the request as soon as practicable.

(2) A person or body, in responding to a request, is not bound by any duty of confidentiality imposed on the person or body by or under any Act or agreement, despite anything to the contrary in that Act or agreement.

Matters and tests for determining application in relation to homosexual offence

32.—(1) The Permanent Secretary must refuse an application made under section 28 in respect of a homosexual offence, unless satisfied—

- (a) that the offence with which the eligible person has been or was convicted is a homosexual offence; and
- (b) that, on the balance of probabilities, both of the following tests are satisfied in relation to the eligible person—
 - (i) the eligible person would not have been charged with the homosexual offence but for the fact that the eligible person was suspected of having engaged in the conduct constituting the offence for the purposes of, or in connection with, sexual activity of a homosexual nature;

- (ii) that conduct, if engaged in by the eligible person at the time of the making of the application, would not constitute an offence under the law of Fiji.

(2) In considering whether the test set out in subsection (1)(b)(ii) is satisfied, the Permanent Secretary must (where relevant) have regard to—

- (a) whether any person involved in the conduct constituting the offence, including the eligible person, consented to the conduct; and
- (b) the ages, or respective ages, of any such persons at the time of that conduct.

(3) Subsection (4) applies if—

- (a) consent of a person is a relevant issue in determining whether the test set out in subsection (1)(b)(ii) is satisfied; and
- (b) the Permanent Secretary is not satisfied, from the available records, that consent had been given.

(4) The Permanent Secretary may only be satisfied on the issue of consent by written evidence touching on that issue—

- (a) from a person, other than the eligible person, who was involved in the conduct constituting the offence; or
- (b) if no such person can be found after reasonable enquiries are made by the applicant from a person, other than the applicant, with knowledge of the circumstances in which that conduct occurred.

Matters and tests for determining application in relation to larceny offence

33.—(1) The Permanent Secretary must refuse an application made under section 28 in respect of a larceny offence, unless satisfied—

- (a) the eligible person is an indigenous person, and if the eligible person is deceased he or she was an indigenous person;
- (b) that the offence with which the eligible person has been or was convicted is a larceny offence; and
- (c) that, on the balance of probabilities, the following tests are satisfied in relation to the eligible person—
 - (i) the eligible person would not have been charged with the larceny offence, but for the fact that the eligible person was suspected of having engaged in the conduct constituting the larceny offence for the purpose of or in connection with the taking of a thing in the exercise of a customary right; and
 - (ii) that the eligible person's conduct constituting the larceny offence occurred at, on or in the land, sea or waterway that is or forms part of the *vanua* to which the eligible person belongs.

(2) The Permanent Secretary in considering whether the tests set out in subsection (1) (c) are satisfied, the Permanent Secretary must have regard to any statements or written evidence provided by the headman of the *mataqali* to which the eligible person belongs, that but for the exercise of the customary right, the eligible person would not have been convicted of the larceny offence.

Withdrawal of application

34.—(1) An applicant may withdraw his or her application at any time before the Permanent Secretary determines it.

(2) The Permanent Secretary may treat an application as having been withdrawn if the applicant does not, within the applicable period, provide any information required under section 29(1) or further information required under section 30(1)(d).

(3) Despite an application being withdrawn or treated as being withdrawn under this section, the Permanent Secretary may reinstate the application if satisfied that the applicant wants to proceed with it and has provided any information required under section 29(1) or further information required under section 30(1)(d).

Determination of application by Permanent Secretary

35.—(1) The Permanent Secretary must determine an application by approving or refusing it as soon as practicable after it is received.

(2) The Permanent Secretary must give written notice of the decision to the applicant within 14 days of making it.

(3) If an application is approved, the historical conviction is expunged by force of this section, 28 days after the day of the making of the decision.

(4) If the decision is a refusal of the application, the written notice must—

- (a) state the reasons for the decision;
- (b) inform the applicant that they may apply to the Mercy Commission to have the decision reviewed; and
- (c) explain how an application may be made to the Mercy Commission.

(5) If the determination is an approval of the application, the written notice must state the reasons for the decision.

Restriction on right to re-apply

36.—(1) A person whose application in respect of a historical conviction has been refused by the Permanent Secretary is only entitled to have a further application in respect of that conviction considered by the Permanent Secretary in the circumstances set out in subsection (2).

(2) The circumstances are that the Permanent Secretary is satisfied that necessary supporting information contained in the further application became available only after the earlier application was determined.

*Division 3—Review of decisions by Mercy Commission**Application for review of Permanent Secretary decision by the Mercy Commission*

37.—(1) An eligible applicant may apply to the Mercy Commission for the review of a decision of the Permanent Secretary under section 35(1) to refuse an application.

(2) An application for review under subsection (1) must be made within 28 days after the day on which the applicant is given notice of the decision of the Permanent Secretary.

Notice requirements

38. If an application under section 37(1) is made for review of a decision, the eligible applicant, must give notice of the application and any interim or temporary directives of the Mercy Commission in respect of the application to—

- (a) the Permanent Secretary;
- (b) the Minister responsible for justice; and
- (c) the Commissioner of Police.

Application to Mercy Commission may be withdrawn in certain circumstances

39.—(1) An eligible applicant under section 37 may withdraw his or her application at any time before the Mercy Commission determines it.

(2) The Mercy Commission may treat an application as having been withdrawn if the eligible applicant does not provide any information requested in a specified period by the Mercy Commission.

Power of Mercy Commission to make determination

40.—(1) In making a determination under this section the Mercy Commission must perform the function of reviewing a decision of the Permanent Secretary in accordance with section 138 of the Constitution.

(2) In determining an application under section 37(1) the Mercy Commission may determine that the application of the eligible applicant—

- (a) satisfies the matters and tests under section 32 in relation to a homosexual offence and replace the decision of the Permanent Secretary with a decision approving the application;
- (b) does not satisfy the matters and tests under section 32 in relation to a homosexual offence and uphold the decision of the Permanent Secretary refusing the application;
- (c) satisfies the matters and tests under section 33 in relation to a larceny offence and replace the decision of the Permanent Secretary with a decision approving the application; or
- (d) does not satisfy the matters and tests under section 33 in relation to a larceny offence and uphold the decision of the Permanent Secretary refusing the application.

Orders made by Mercy Commission

41. In an application under this Division, the Mercy Commission may make interim orders or temporary orders that it considers necessary.

*Division 4—General matters**Confidentiality*

42.—(1) A person commits an offence if he or she directly or indirectly, makes a record of, or discloses or communicates to any person, any information relating to an application under this Part acquired by him or her in performing a function or exercising a power under this Part.

(2) A person who contravenes subsection (1) without reasonable excuse commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$10,000 or a term of imprisonment not exceeding 1 year or both.

Evidentiary provisions

43.—(1) This section applies to a document purporting to be given by the Permanent Secretary or the Mercy Commission certifying as to whether an application in respect of a historical conviction was approved or refused.

(2) The document is admissible in evidence in any proceedings and, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, is proof of the matters stated in the document.

(3) The document must be presumed in any proceedings, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to have been given by the Permanent Secretary or the Mercy Commission, as the case requires.

No entitlement to compensation

44. If a conviction for a historical offence is expunged under section 35 or 40, a person is not entitled to compensation of any kind, on account of that conviction becoming expunged, in respect of the fact that—

- (a) the person was charged with, or prosecuted for, the historical offence;
- (b) the person was convicted of, or sentenced for, the historical offence;
- (c) the person served a sentence for the historical offence;
- (d) the person was required to pay a fine or other money (including costs or any amount by way of restitution or compensation) on account of being convicted of, or sentenced for, the historical offence;
- (e) the person has an expunged conviction; or
- (f) the person incurred any loss, or suffered any consequence, as a result of an event referred to in paragraph (a), (b), (c), (d) or (e), whether or not that person was the person whose conviction was expunged.

Prerogative of mercy not affected

45. Nothing in this Act is to be deemed to affect the prerogative of mercy.

PART 5—EXPIATED FIXED PENALTY OFFENCES

Expiating the offence

46.—(1) This Part applies if a fixed penalty notice is not withdrawn and the fixed penalty and any fee added to the fixed penalty under written law, is paid within the period specified in the notice or late payment is accepted.

(2) A person on whom the fixed penalty notice is served has expiated the offence by—

- (a) payment of the fixed penalty and any fee added to the fixed penalty; or
- (b) expiated the offence by serving a term of imprisonment in default of payment.

(3) A fixed penalty paid in accordance with the relevant Act or subsidiary legislation must be applied in the same way as a fine paid under an order of a court made on an offender being convicted or found guilty of the offence to which the fixed penalty relates.

Effect of expiated fixed penalty offence

47.—(1) Subject to this Act and any other written law, if a person has expiated an offence under section 46—

- (a) no further proceedings may be taken against the person on whom the fixed penalty notice was served in respect of the offence; and
- (b) no conviction is to be taken to have been recorded against that person for the offence.

(2) The payment of a fixed penalty by a person is not and must not be taken to be—

- (a) an admission of guilt in relation to the offence; or
- (b) an admission of liability for the purpose of any civil claim or proceeding arising out of the same occurrence, and the payment of the fixed penalty does not in any way affect or prejudice any such claim or proceeding.

(3) The serving of a term of imprisonment by a person in default of payment of a fixed penalty is not and must not be deemed to be—

- (a) an admission of guilt in relation to the offence the subject of the fixed penalty; or
- (b) an admission of liability for the purpose of any civil claim or proceeding arising out of the same occurrence and does not in any way affect or prejudice any such claim or proceeding.

(4) The payment of a fixed penalty or the serving of a term of imprisonment must not be referred to or provided to a court for the purpose of determining sentence for any offence.

(5) For the avoidance of doubt, if a fixed penalty and any fee added to the fixed penalty are paid and the offence is expiated in accordance with section 46, no further action in respect of the offence may be taken under any Act or subsidiary legislation by—

- (a) the person who was served with the fixed penalty notice; or

- (b) the law enforcement agency, public agency or department that served the notice.

Demerit schemes

48. Despite anything to the contrary in this Part, the expiation of an offence under this Part in relation to an offence which is a fixed penalty offence under any Act or subsidiary legislation, does not prevent the incurring of demerit points under that Act or subsidiary legislation in relation to the fixed penalty offence.

PART 6—CONVICTION RECORDS

Division 1—Effect of spent conviction or spent conviction order

Effect of spent conviction on a person

49.—(1) If a person’s conviction is spent with immediate effect by force of section 17, on expiry of the rehabilitation period under section 16 or by operation of a spent conviction order, he or she is deemed to have no criminal record for the purposes of any question asked of him or her about his or her criminal record.

(2) The person may answer a question asked of him or her about his or her criminal record by stating that he or she has no criminal record.

(3) Nothing in subsection (1) or (2)—

- (a) prevents the person stating that he or she has a criminal record, disclosing his or her criminal record, or consenting to the disclosure of his or her criminal record; or
- (b) authorises the person to answer a question asked of him or her about his or her criminal record by stating that he or she has no criminal record if the question is asked—
 - (i) under the jurisdiction of the law of a foreign country while a person is outside Fiji; or
 - (ii) while he or she is in Fiji but relates to a matter dealt with by the law of a foreign country.

(4) Subsections (1) and (2) are subject to the exceptions in section 55.

Duty of head of Government office that holds public record of spent conviction or spent conviction order

50.—(1) This section applies to the head of a Government office that is a conviction record holder.

(2) Subject to section 55, a person to whom this section applies must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the Government office and its employees and contractors—

- (a) conceal any spent conviction records of a person;
- (b) that the spent conviction of a person when a request is made for a criminal record in relation to the person is not disclosed, other than for a request made by the person to whom the spent conviction relates; and

- (c) do not use any spent conviction record of a person, other than for a purpose authorised under this Act.

Effect of a spent conviction on a conviction record holder, employees and contractor

51.—(1) Subject to section 55, a conviction record holder, or an employee or contractor of a conviction record holder, that holds or has access to criminal records that is responding to a request for the disclosure of a person's criminal record or any information about a person's criminal record, other than a request from the person, must not disclose any spent conviction of the person.

(2) A conviction record holder, or an employee or contractor of a conviction record holder, that holds or has access to the criminal records of a person must not use those criminal records other than for a purpose authorised under this Act.

Offence to unlawfully disclose spent convictions or information relating to spent convictions

52.—(1) An employee or a contractor of a conviction record holder commits an offence if the employee or the contractor knowing that he or she does not have lawful authority under this Act, or being reckless as to whether or not he or she has lawful authority under this Act discloses to a person, body or agency a spent conviction or information about a spent conviction of a person that is required to be concealed.

(2) A person who contravenes subsection (1) commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$10,000.

Offence to require or request an individual to disclose a spent conviction

53.—(1) A person commits an offence if, without lawful authority under this Act, the person requires or requests that an individual—

- (a) disregard the effect of a spent conviction when answering a question about his or her criminal record;
- (b) disregard the effect of a spent conviction and disclose or give consent to the disclosure of his or her spent convictions.

(2) A person who contravenes subsection (1) commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$10,000.

Obtaining spent conviction information by fraud or dishonesty

54. A person commits an offence if the person obtains information relating to a spent conviction by fraud or dishonesty and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$10,000.

Exception to spent conviction and spent conviction order

55.—(1) A person must state that he or she has a criminal record if subsection (3) applies to him or her.

(2) A Government office or an employee or contractor of a Government office, that holds or has access to criminal records may disclose the criminal record or information about the criminal record of a person if subsection (3) applies to him or her.

(3) This subsection applies to a person if—

- (a) the person’s criminal record or information about the person’s criminal record is necessary for any of the following purposes—
 - (i) a law enforcement function that includes the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of a crime by a law enforcement agency or foreign law enforcement agency whose functions correspond to the law enforcement agency in Fiji;
 - (ii) the administration of a sentence or remand by a law enforcement agency;
 - (iii) any criminal or civil proceeding before a court or a tribunal or a parole tribunal;
 - (iv) the performance of a function of a security intelligence agency or officer of a security intelligence agency of Fiji; and
 - (v) to assess the person’s suitability to work with children or persons with a disability;
- (b) the person’s criminal record or information about the person’s criminal record is relevant to any criminal or civil proceedings before a tribunal or court, including sentencing, or proceedings before the parole tribunal;
- (c) the person has made an application to serve in the Fiji Police Force, Fiji Corrections Service or the Republic of Fiji Military Forces;
- (d) the person has made an application for employment in a national security agency of Fiji or for appointment as a judicial officer; and
- (e) the person has made an application to act in a role that predominantly involves children.

Limits on use of criminal record

56.—(1) A person, body or agency to whom the criminal record of a person, or information about the criminal record of a person, has been disclosed under section 55, must not use that criminal record or information about the criminal record for any purpose other than the purpose in relation to which it was disclosed to the person, body or agency.

(2) Any person, body or agency or employee of a body or agency that holds or has access to the criminal records of a person who has a spent conviction, unless the person has disclosed the spent conviction under section 55, must not use those records or any information about those records for any purpose other than for a purpose for which those records or that information may also be disclosed under section 55.

*Division 2—Effect of expunged convictions**Effect of expunged conviction on a person*

57.—(1) If a person's conviction for a historical offence is an expunged conviction, for the purposes of the laws of Fiji, the expungement of the conviction has the effects set out in this section.

(2) A question about the person's criminal record, including one put in a legal proceeding and required to be answered under oath or by affirmation, is to be deemed not to refer to the expunged conviction, but to refer only to any conviction that the person has that is not expunged.

(3) The person is not required to disclose to any other person for any purpose, including when giving evidence on oath or affirmation in a legal proceeding, information concerning any expunged conviction.

(4) In the application to the convicted person of a written law or arrangement including an agreement, contract, deed or trust—

- (a) a reference to a conviction, however expressed, is to be deemed not to refer to any expunged conviction; and
- (b) a reference to the person's character or fitness, however expressed, is not to be deemed as allowing or requiring account to be taken of any expunged conviction.

(5) Any expunged conviction, or the non-disclosure of any expunged conviction, is not a proper ground for—

- (a) refusing the person any appointment, post, status, or privilege; or
- (b) revoking any appointment, status, or privilege held by the person, or dismissing the person from any post.

(6) The fact that a refusal, revocation, or dismissal of that kind occurred, solely on account of that historical conviction, before the historical conviction became an expunged conviction is not a proper ground for a refusal, revocation, or dismissal, solely on account of that conviction, occurring after the expungement.

(7) Expungement of a historical conviction requires the records of the expunged conviction to be sealed.

Obligation in relation to public record and expunged conviction

58.—(1) The Permanent Secretary, within the prescribed period after a conviction becomes an expunged conviction, must notify any relevant conviction record holder in writing of that fact.

(2) A conviction record holder must take the action set out in subsection (3) in relation to any public record relating to an expunged conviction under his or her management or control as soon as reasonably practicable after receiving the notice under subsection (1) and, in any event, not later than the prescribed period after receiving it.

(3) The action is to seal any public record relating to an expunged conviction—

- (a) by marking any file or any document with a prescribed statement to the effect that it relates to an expunged conviction;
- (b) by annotating any electronic entry in a public record with a statement to the effect that it relates to an expunged conviction; or
- (c) for public records or secondary records held in an electronic format by Fiji Police Force or the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, take any necessary steps to do one or more of the following—
 - (i) remove the entry;
 - (ii) make the entry incapable of being found; or
 - (iii) de-identify the information contained in the entry and destroy any link between it and information that would identify the person to whom it referred.

(4) As soon as practicable after taking action in relation to a file, document or entry in a public record, the conviction record holder must give notice of the action taken to the Permanent Secretary.

(5) As soon as practicable after the Permanent Secretary is satisfied that all necessary action has been taken in relation to files, documents or entries in public records, the Permanent Secretary must give written notice of that fact to the person who has the expunged conviction.

Effect of expungement on request to disclose and use of expunged conviction

59.—(1) This section applies to a conviction record holder, employee or contractor of a conviction record holder, that holds or has access to public records that contains information in relation to an expunged conviction or lists expunged convictions.

(2) The conviction record holder, employee or contractor in responding to a request for disclosure of a person's criminal record or any information about a person's criminal record, must not disclose the criminal record of an expunged conviction.

Unlawfully disclosing expunged conviction or information relating to expunged conviction required to be sealed

60.—(1) This section applies to a person who—

- (a) is an employee or contractor of a conviction record holder; and
- (b) has access to public records that contains information in relation to an expunged conviction or lists an expunged conviction.

(2) Subject to subsection (3), the person commits an offence if the person—

- (a) discloses to any person, body or agency the public record that contains information in relation to an expunged conviction or lists an expunged conviction, or information about the public record; and

- (b) discloses that public record or that information knowing that the person does not have lawful authority from the person who has the expunged conviction.

(3) Subsection (2) does not apply to or prevent disclosure of a public record that contains information in relation to an expunged conviction or lists an expunged conviction, if the person who has the expunged conviction gives written consent authorising the disclosure of his or her criminal record including the expunged conviction.

(4) A person who contravenes this section commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$20,000.

Offence to require or request person to disregard expungement

61.—(1) A person commits an offence if the person requires or requests that a person who has an expunged conviction—

- (a) disregard the effect of expungement under this Act when answering a question about the person's criminal record, or disclosing information concerning any convictions of the person, or both; or
- (b) disregard the effect of expungement under this Act and disclose, or give consent to the disclosure of, any public records that contain information in relation to the person's expunged conviction or lists the person's expunged conviction.

(2) A person who contravenes subsection (1) commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$10,000.

Division 3—Fiji Police Force clearance certificate

Certification of criminal record

62.—(1) The Fiji Police Force must not require a person who applies for certification of his or her criminal record to disclose a spent conviction, an expunged conviction or an expiated fixed penalty offence.

(2) The Fiji Police Force must not issue a Fiji Police clearance certificate to a person that contains any of the following—

- (a) a spent conviction, unless an exception under section 55(3) applies to the person;
- (b) an expunged conviction; and
- (c) an expiated fixed penalty offence.

PART 7—MISCELLANEOUS

Operation of this Act

63. This Act does not limit or affect the operation of the Registration of Sex Offenders Act 2021.

Regulations

64. The Minister may make regulations to prescribe matters that are required or permitted by this Act to be prescribed or are necessary or convenient to be prescribed for carrying out or giving effect to this Act and generally for achieving the purposes of this Act including—

- (a) forms and procedures for the making of applications;
- (b) forms and procedures for providing evidence of matters for the determination of applications made to the Permanent Secretary or Mercy Commission;
- (c) procedures for the handling of information about spent convictions;
- (d) procedures for sealing records of expunged convictions;
- (e) guidelines for applicants for a spent conviction order or expungement of a historical conviction; and
- (f) guidelines on matters in relation to customary rights, historical convictions, kin representatives and requests for further information from applicants.

Repeal

65. The Rehabilitation of Offenders (Irrelevant Convictions) Act 1997 is repealed.

Revocation

66. The Rehabilitation of Offenders (Irrelevant Convictions) Regulations 1998 are revoked.

Transitional

67.—(1) This Act applies to a conviction for an offence to which Part 3 applies or a historical offence irrespective of when the offence is committed, the conviction is recorded or findings of guilt are made.

(2) On and from the commencement of this Act, the rehabilitation period for a conviction for an offence irrespective of when the offence was committed or the conviction was recorded or findings of guilt were made is to be in accordance with this Act.

(3) An application made under section 27 of the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Irrelevant Convictions) Act 1997 but not determined immediately before the commencement of this Act, is deemed to be an application under this Act to which, as the case requires—

- (a) section 17 applies so that the conviction is spent with immediate effect;
- (b) section 18 applies so that the conviction is spent on expiry of the rehabilitation period; or
- (c) is made under section 20 for a spent conviction order.

(4) This Act applies to—

- (a) an answer given on or after the commencement of Part 6 by a person who has a spent conviction or an expunged conviction, to a question asked about his or her criminal record before the commencement of Part 6; and

- (b) a response given on or after the commencement of this Act to a request made before the commencement of this Act for the disclosure of a person's criminal record or information about a person's criminal record if, on commencement of this Act, the person to whom the request relates has become any of the following—
 - (i) an applicant for the purposes of Part 3;
 - (ii) an eligible person who made an application under section 28(1); or
 - (iii) an eligible person in respect of whom an application is made under section 28(2).

December 2025

CRIMINAL RECORDS BILL 2025

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Bill and is intended only to indicate its general effect)

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Criminal Records Bill 2025 (**‘Bill’**) provides for certain convictions to be spent or expunged and, fixed penalty offences to be expiated to give rehabilitated individuals a clean slate in relation to criminal records.
- 1.2 The Bill provides for the governing principles that are to be promoted in the exercise of functions and powers under the new legislation. The governing principles include the rehabilitation principle, the forgiveness principle, the respect principle, the young person principle and the second chance principle.
- 1.3 The Bill recognises the importance of a second chance for individuals who have changed and started a new life to be able to obtain employment and other opportunities.
- 1.4 The Bill also addresses the past injustices where individuals were convicted of homosexual offences that are no longer an offence in Fiji and larceny offences that discriminated against the exercise of customary rights by indigenous persons that is not present in the modern offence of theft. Customary rights have been in existence long before the common law of England as at 2 January 1875 was applied in Fiji.
- 1.5 Historical offences such as larceny of fish, trees, fences, fruit and vegetables appear to directly discriminate against the customary practices to take things from the land for the purpose of communal ownership of the lands and access to marine resources. Section 26(8)(g) of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji (**‘Constitution’**) requires that a law must not be inconsistent with rights to give effect to the communal ownership of iTaukei, Rotuman and Banaban lands and access to marine resources.
- 1.6 The Bill deals with the management of public records that contain information about certain convictions that are spent, expunged and fixed penalty offences that are expiated to enable rehabilitated citizens to obtain a clean police clearance certificate subject to clause 55.

- 1.7 The Bill also ensures the public safety of the Fiji community by enabling the disclosure of spent convictions where an exception applies. Exceptions include the disclosure of spent convictions where it is necessary for a law enforcement function, administration of a sentence, proceedings before a court, security intelligence, assessing suitability to work with children or persons with disability, to serve in the Fiji Police Force, Fiji Corrections Service, Republic of Fiji Military Forces, to work in national security agencies or, to work in the delivery of education services.

2.0 CLAUSES

- 2.1 Clause 1 of the Bill provides for the short title and commencement. If passed by Parliament, the new legislation will come into force on a date or dates appointed by the Minister by notice in the Gazette.
- 2.2 Clause 2 of the Bill provides for the definitions and interpretation of terms used throughout the new legislation. Key definitions include “adopted child”, “criminal record”, “customary right”, “indigenous person”, “kin representative”, “*mataqali*”, and “young offender”. Many of the key definitions give legal recognition and meaning to customary rights and iTaukei terms and culture that are integral to the expungement of historical offences scheme. Reference has been made to the Constitution and other laws to establish the legal meaning of these terms.
- 2.3 Clause 3 of the Bill provides for the meaning of the term “conviction” as it appears in the Bill. The term is given an inclusive meaning to ensure findings of guilt whether or not a conviction is recorded and fixed penalty convictions are also convictions that may be spent in the same way as a conviction recorded and imposed on an individual. The provision also makes clear that in relation to a spent conviction, a conviction also includes an offence against a foreign law.
- 2.4 Clause 4 of the Bill provides for the meaning of the term “custodial sentence” as it appears in the Bill. The definition is inclusive of the different types of detention for an adult or child offender. The meaning of the term sets the rehabilitation period that will apply to a person before his or her convictions may be spent.
- 2.5 Clause 5 of the Bill provides for the determination of the length of a custodial sentence. The length of a custodial sentence is a key threshold for whether or not an individual will be the subject of a “serious conviction” and must apply to the Magistrates Court for an order to make his or her serious conviction spent.
- 2.6 Clause 6 of the Bill provides for the meaning of the term “expunge”. To expunge a conviction under the Bill is to permanently seal any public record of the historical offence without exception. Expungement is the removal or destruction of the conviction for the historical offence and makes lawful any claim or statement by the person that he or he has not convicted of a historical offence.

- 2.7 Clause 7 of the Bill provides for the meaning of the term “rehabilitation period”. There are three rehabilitation periods that apply to a person who has a conviction. A person who has a conviction where no custodial sentence was imposed is subject to a 4 year period. A person who has a conviction and a custodial sentence of up to 30 months is subject to a 7 year period. A person who has a serious conviction is subject to a 10 year period.
- 2.8 Clause 8 of the Bill sets out the objectives of the Bill.
- 2.9 Clause 9 of the Bill provides that the new legislation binds the State.
- 2.10 Clause 10 of the Bill provides for the application of the new legislation to historical convictions and convictions that may be spent under Part 3 irrespective of when the offence was committed, convictions were recorded or findings of guilt made. This provision will ensure an individual who has made a change and been rehabilitated before the new legislation commences will be able to have his or her convictions spent or expunged or fixed penalty offences expiated so as to have the benefit of a clean slate. The provision also clarifies that expungement of historical convictions does not affect the operation of Part 3 that provides for spent convictions.
- 2.11 Clause 11 of the Bill provides for the governing principles set out in clauses 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 are to apply to the new legislation. Any person who performs any function or exercises any power under the new legislation must do so in a manner that is intended to promote the governing principles.
- 2.12 Clause 12 of the Bill establishes the rehabilitation principle for the new legislation. The principle provides that the rehabilitation of a person is to be promoted and respected so that the person can be supported to be a valued member of the community.
- 2.13 Clause 13 of the Bill establishes the forgiveness principle. The principle requires that the forgiveness of victims, families, members of the community, headmen of the *mataqali* of a person who has been convicted is to be understood as important to bring about change and the rehabilitation of a person.
- 2.14 Clause 14 of the Bill establishes the respect principle. The principle requires that respect be given to a person who attempts change and to be rehabilitated.
- 2.15 Clause 15 of the Bill establishes the young person principle that promotes the opportunity for a young person to learn from being convicted and work towards changing his or her life for the better.
- 2.16 Clause 16 of the Bill establishes the second chance principle. The principle promotes a second chance being given to a person who engages in the process of rehabilitation.

- 2.17 Clause 17 of the Bill provides that certain minor convictions such as the finding of guilt without the recording of a conviction or where the only penalty imposed is a fine will be spent with immediate effect on the day that a person is convicted.
- 2.18 Clause 18 of the Bill provides that a conviction for an offence against a law of Fiji or a foreign law becomes spent on the day on which the rehabilitation period for the conviction expires unless the conviction is a serious conviction or the conviction has become spent with immediate effect by force of clause 17.
- 2.19 Clause 19 of the Bill makes provision for the time of commencement for the rehabilitation period that applies to a person. The clause also makes provision for the rehabilitation period to recommence where a person has a subsequent conviction during a rehabilitation period that has already commenced. Provision is made for the rehabilitation period for young offenders to not recommence in relation to certain subsequent convictions. The intent of this provision is consistent with the young person principle under clause 15.
- 2.20 Clause 20 of the Bill provides that a person who has completed a rehabilitation period and is the subject of a serious conviction may apply to the Magistrates Court for an order so that the serious conviction is spent. The provision sets out that a person who was a child at the time of being sentenced and any other person who has certain serious convictions that include a custodial sentence of not more than 5 years may make an application.
- 2.21 Clause 21 of the Bill provides that the Magistrates Court may refuse an application for a spent conviction order if the application is vexatious, misconceived or does not comply with the form and content requirements under clause 22.
- 2.22 Clause 22 of the Bill sets out the requirements for making a proper application for a spent conviction order and confers on the Magistrates Court the power issue a written notice requiring an applicant to provide further information in support of their application.
- 2.23 Clause 23 of the Bill confers on the Magistrates Court the power to make an order that a rehabilitation report be prepared in respect of an applicant for a spent conviction order. The rehabilitation report must be prepared by the Permanent Secretary and contain the matters set out in the provision. The Permanent Secretary must file the rehabilitation report with the Magistrates Court and provide a copy to the applicant, Attorney-General, the Commissioner of Police and the Commissioner of Fiji Corrections Service. A person may file notice of an intention to dispute the rehabilitation report at the hearing of the application.

- 2.24 Clause 24 of the Bill makes provision for the applicant for a spent conviction order to serve a copy of the application on the Attorney-General, the Commissioner of Police and the Commissioner of the Fiji Corrections Service. Submissions may be made by the Attorney-General, the Commissioner of Police and the Commissioner of the Fiji Corrections Service at the hearing if notice is provided to the court, before the expiry of 28 days after being served a copy of the application.
- 2.25 Clause 25 of the Bill provides for the hearing and determination of an application for a spent conviction order. To assist the Magistrates Court to hear and determine the application it is not bound by the rules of evidence and may inform itself in any way the court thinks fit. The provision confers an administrative jurisdiction on the Magistrates Court to hear an application for an order that may if made impose requirements on the holding of public records of spent convictions and the entitlements of a person who has a spent conviction. It is not a civil or criminal jurisdiction as it does not provide for the making of legal arguments or leading of evidence on a dispute that requires determination by the court.
- 2.26 Clause 26 of the Bill confers on the Magistrates Court the power to make a spent conviction order and the matters that the court must consider to determine whether to make or refuse to make the order.
- 2.27 Clause 27 of the Bill provides for the making of further application where a person has previously made an application for a spent conviction order. The Magistrates Court may in its discretion dismiss any further application that it considers to be frivolous, vexatious or an abuse of the procedure of the court.
- 2.28 Clause 28 of the Bill makes provision for a person who is convicted of a historical offence to apply for an administrative determination by the Permanent Secretary to approve or refuse the expungement of a historical conviction of a person. The clause also provides for a kin representative of a person who was convicted of a historical offence and is deceased to make an application to the Permanent Secretary for the deceased person's conviction to be expunged. The requirements for making a valid application are set out in the clause.
- 2.29 Clause 29 of the Bill confers on the Permanent Secretary the power to require an applicant to provide any information that is missing from an application within 28 days or any longer period determined by the Permanent Secretary.
- 2.30 Clause 30 of the Bill sets out the matters that the Permanent Secretary must give proper consideration to in considering an application for expungement of a historical conviction.

- 2.31 Clause 31 of the Bill confers on the Permanent Secretary a power to require a person or body to give information about the offence that is the subject of the application and that is requested under clause 30(1)(c). The clause provides that bodies such as a court, tribunal, the Fiji Police Force and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution are not bound by any duty of confidentiality imposed by any Act or agreement in complying with the Permanent Secretary's request.
- 2.32 Clause 32 of the Bill sets out the matters and tests that the Permanent Secretary must be satisfied to approve an application for the expungement of a homosexual offence. The balance of probabilities is the evidentiary test that applies the tests contained in the clause. The Permanent Secretary must also have regard to matters set out in the clause including whether any person involved in the conduct constituting the offence consented and the person's age at the time of that conduct. In having regard to a matter, the Permanent Secretary must take the matter into account and give weight to it in making a determination.
- 2.33 Clause 33 of the Bill sets out the matters and tests that the Permanent Secretary must be satisfied to approve an application for the expungement of a larceny offence. The balance of probabilities is the evidentiary test that applies the tests contained in the clause. The Permanent Secretary must also have regard to matters set out in the clause including whether the eligible person involved in the conduct constituting the larceny offence is an indigenous person and on the balance of probabilities would not have been charged but for the fact that the conduct was for the purpose or in connection with the exercise of a customary right. The Permanent Secretary must also be satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the conduct constituting the larceny offence occurred at, on or in the land, sea or waterway that is or forms part of the area or land to which the eligible person belongs. In having regard to a matter, the Permanent Secretary must take the matter into account and give weight to it in making a determination.
- 2.34 Clause 34 of the Bill provides for an applicant to withdraw an application at any time before the Permanent Secretary determines it. The clause provides the Permanent Secretary with the power to reinstate an application that has been withdrawn.
- 2.35 Clause 35 of the Bill provides for the power of the Permanent Secretary to determine an application for the expungement of a historical offence by approving it or refusing it. The applicant must be given written notice within 14 days of the making of decision by the Permanent Secretary. If the Permanent Secretary approves an application the historical conviction is expunged 28 days after the date of the decision being made.

- 2.36 Clause 36 of the Bill provides that a person is allowed one further application if the Permanent Secretary is satisfied that necessary supporting information contained in the further application became available only after the earlier application was determined.
- 2.37 Clause 37 of the Bill sets out that if an application for the expungement of a historical offence is refused the eligible applicant may apply to the Mercy Commission for review of the decision of the Permanent Secretary.
- 2.38 Clause 38 of the Bill sets out the notice requirements if an eligible applicant makes an application for review of the Permanent Secretary's decision to the Mercy Commission.
- 2.39 Clause 39 of the Bill provides for an applicant to withdraw an application to the Mercy Commission for review at any time before it is determined.
- 2.40 Clause 40 of the Bill confers on the Mercy Commission the power to review of a decision of the Permanent Secretary to refuse an application to expunge a historical offence. This review function is conferred on the Mercy Commission in accordance with section 138 of the Constitution. The Mercy Commission may replace or uphold the decision of the Permanent Secretary refusing the application.
- 2.41 Clause 41 of the Bill confers on the Mercy Commission the function of making interim orders or temporary orders as is necessary for the circumstances of the review application before it.
- 2.42 Clause 42 of the Bill creates offence for a person who directly or indirectly makes a record, discloses or communicates any information relating to at application to expunge a historical offence. The offence imposes a penalty of a fine not exceeding \$10,000 or a term of imprisonment not exceeding 1 year or both for a person who contravenes the offence.
- 2.43 Clause 43 of the Bill provides that a document purporting to have been given by the Permanent Secretary or the Mercy Commission certifying whether an application in respect of a historical conviction was approved or refused is admissible in evidence in any proceeding and in the absence of proof to the contrary is proof of the matters stated in the document.
- 2.44 Clause 44 of the Bill makes clear that the expungement of a historical offence does not mean that the person is entitled to compensation to account for being charged with the historical offence, convicted or sentenced with the historical offence or for serving a sentence or suffering any kind of loss or consequence.
- 2.45 Clause 45 of the Bill is a deeming provision that makes clear the new legislation does not affect the prerogative of mercy.

- 2.46 Clause 46 of the Bill provides for the expiation of fixed penalty offences where a person pays the fixed penalty and any fee in respect of a fixed penalty offence or serves a term of imprisonment in default of payment.
- 2.47 Clause 47 of the Bill provides for the effect of a person expiating a fixed penalty offence in accordance with clause 46. No further proceedings may be brought against the person in respect of the fixed penalty offence, no conviction is taken to have been recorded against the person, the payment of the fixed penalty or serving a term of imprisonment in default of payment is not an admission of guilt or an admission of liability.
- 2.48 Clause 48 of the Bill makes clear that the expiation of a fixed penalty offence does not prevent the incurring of demerit points under the relevant Act or subsidiary legislation establishing the fixed penalty offence.
- 2.49 Clause 49 of the Bill sets out that the effect of a person's conviction being spent under the new legislation, is that the person is deemed to have no criminal record for the purposes of any question asked of him or her about his or her criminal record. The provision further provides that the person may disclose or consent to the disclosure of his or her criminal record, but nothing under the new legislation authorises the person to state he or she does not have a criminal record if asked a question under the law of a foreign country.
- 2.50 Clause 50 of the Bill provides for the duties of a head of a Government office that holds public records of spent convictions or spent conviction orders to conceal any spent conviction records of a person unless that person requests disclosure of the records to him or her.
- 2.51 Clause 51 of the Bill sets out the effect of a spent conviction on a conviction record holder, employee or contractor. Provides that the conviction record holder, employee or contractor must not disclose a person's criminal record or information about the person's criminal record that is contained in a criminal record on request from another person. The provision also provides that conviction records must only be used for a purpose authorised under the new legislation.
- 2.52 Clause 52 of the Bill creates an offence for an employee or a contractor of a conviction record holder who knows he or she does not have lawful authority or being reckless as to whether he or she has lawful authority discloses a spent conviction or information about a spent conviction that is required to be concealed. The penalty for contravention of the offence is a fine not exceeding \$10,000.
- 2.53 Clause 53 of the Bill creates an offence for a person to without lawful authority require or request that an individual disregard the effect of a spent conviction. A person who contravenes the offence is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$10,000.

- 2.54 Clause 54 of the Bill creates an offence for a person who obtains information relating to a spent conviction by fraud or dishonesty and a person who commits the offence is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$10,000.
- 2.55 Clause 55 of the Bill provides for exceptions to the effect of a spent conviction and spent conviction order. The circumstances where a person who has a spent conviction must state he or she has a criminal record are for the purposes of a law enforcement function, administration of a sentence, any criminal or civil proceeding, performance of a function of a security intelligence agency, to assess suitability to work with children or persons with a disability, an application to serve in the Fiji Police Force, Fiji Corrections Service or the Republic of Fiji Military Forces, employment in a national security agency, employment in a role that predominantly involves delivery of education to children.
- 2.56 Clause 56 of the Bill provides that a person, body or agency to whom criminal records are disclosed in accordance with an exception under clause 55 must not use that information for any purpose other than the purpose in relation to which it was disclosed.
- 2.57 Clause 57 of the Bill provides for the effect on a person on the expungement of his or her historical conviction. The person may deem any question put to him or her under oath about the person's criminal record does not refer to the expunged conviction, is not required to disclose any information about the expunged conviction under oath or affirmation in a legal proceeding, that any document referring to a conviction is deemed to not refer to the expunged conviction, a position or appointment must not be refused on the grounds of the non-disclosure of the expunged conviction. The clause also provides that expungement of a historical offence requires the records of the expunged conviction to be sealed.
- 2.58 Clause 58 of the Bill provides for the obligations of the Permanent Secretary and conviction record holders on a conviction becoming an expunged conviction and the actions required to seal any public record relating to the expunged conviction.
- 2.59 Clause 59 of the Bill provides that the effect of expungement on conviction record holders, employees and contractors of a conviction record holder is that in terms of requests to disclose and use expunged convictions, the criminal records of expunged convictions must not be disclosed.
- 2.60 Clause 60 of the Bill creates an offence that applies to a person who is an employee or contractor of a conviction record holder and who has access to public records that contain information in relation to an expunged conviction or lists of expunged convictions. The person commits an offence if he or she discloses that information knowing that he or she does not have lawful authority from the person who has the expunged conviction. A person who contravenes the offence is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$20,000.

- 2.61 Clause 61 of the Bill creates an offence if a person requires or requests that a person who has an expunged conviction disregards the effect of the expungement and answers a question or disclose information about the expunged offence. A person who contravenes the offence is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$10,000.
- 2.62 Clause 62 of the Bill makes provision for police clearance certificates by making clear that a spent conviction, expunged conviction or expiated fixed penalty offence must not be in a Police clearance certificate unless an exception under clause 55 applies.
- 2.63 Clause 63 of the Bill states that the new legislation does not limit or affect the operation of the Registration off Sex Offenders Act 2021.
- 2.64 Clause 64 of the Bill provides for the regulation making powers available to the Minister.
- 2.65 Clause 65 of the Bill repeals the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Irrelevant Convictions) Act 1997.
- 2.66 Clause 66 of the Bill revokes the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Irrelevant Convictions) Regulations 1998.
- 2.67 Clause 67 of the Bill makes provision for the transitional arrangements that will apply on the repeal of the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Irrelevant Convictions) Act 1997.

3.0 MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- 3.1 The new legislation comes under the responsibility of the Minister responsible for justice.

S. D. TURAGA
Acting Attorney-General