

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI

PARLIAMENT OF FIJI – A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

The Parliament of the Republic of Fiji is vested with the authority and power to make laws for the State.

History

The first attempt to set up a government based on the principles of Westminster System happened at Nasova, Levuka in 1871 by Ratu Cakobau. It was then called the Kingdom of Fiji. In 1874 Fiji was ceded to Great Britain. From 1874 to 1970 the Executive Council and the Legislative Council were established. Fiji gained independence in 1970 and the Legislative Council became the Parliament of Fiji. Since independence, Parliamentary rule was interrupted by political instability - two in 1987, 2000 and 2006.

Members of Parliament

Parliament consists of 56 Members (this number is subject to change).

The President only comes to Parliament during the Opening of Parliament, and participates in the law-making process by assenting to the Bills after being passed by Parliament.

Why do we need a Parliament?

Parliament is the cornerstone of any democracy. This is a system of government in which the citizens exercise power to elect representatives from among themselves to form a governing body which we call Parliament. Democracy is sometimes referred to as “the rule of the majority.”

What does Parliament do?

1. It amends and passes laws.
2. It represents the people.
3. It holds the Government to account (oversight).

Term of Parliament

4 years from the date of its first meeting after a general election of the members of Parliament.

General Elections and Voting Age

Elections are held every 4 years. MPs are elected by a multi-member open list system of proportional representation in a single national electoral roll. Voting age is 18 years and above. Voters need to be registered to be eligible to vote.

Elections in the Parliament

During the first Parliament sitting after a general election, the following positions are elected:

1. Speaker
2. Deputy Speaker
3. Prime Minister (if no one political party has won more than 50% of the total number of seats)
4. Leader of the Opposition

Note. The President is also elected in the Parliament when a vacancy arises.

Parliament Sitting Dates/Parliament Calendar

The Business Committee draws up a Parliament Sitting Calendar, and is approved by Parliament. The Parliament sitting weeks are marked on the calendar which is available on the Parliament Website.

The Parliament Secretariat

This consists of the:

- Secretary-General to Parliament
- Deputy Secretary-General to Parliament
- Head of Legislative Services
- Head of Corporate Services
- 11 Units (*Hansard*, Inter-Parliamentary, Civic Education & Media, Tables, Committees, ICT & Broadcasting, Research & Library, Accounts, Human Resources, Assets & Administration, Transport & Quality Assurance, Monitoring Evaluation).

Location of Parliament

Government Buildings, Constitution Avenue, Suva (Opposite Albert Park).