



STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE

Review Report of the Ministry of Civil Service 2022-2023 annual report



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
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ACRONYMS

HRMIS	Human Resource Management Information System
FLIPS	Fiji Learning Institute for Public Service
MCS	Ministry of Civil Service
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, I am pleased to present this report on the review of the Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report for the financial year 2022–2023.

The Committee's review provided an opportunity to assess the Ministry's performance, strategic priorities, and ongoing reforms aimed at strengthening the efficiency, accountability, and effectiveness of the Civil Service. During the Ministry's public submission on Monday 23 March 2026, the Ministry highlighted key initiatives undertaken during the reporting period, including workforce planning reforms, leadership and capacity development, digital transformation through the Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS), and the strengthening of governance, ethics and customer service delivery across Government Ministries.

The Committee acknowledges the Ministry's efforts in advancing public sector reforms despite challenges associated with recruitment and retention, funding constraints, labour market competition, and the need to further improve employee wellbeing and performance management systems. The Committee also recognises the Ministry's commitment towards enhancing transparency, promoting ethical conduct, and improving service delivery standards throughout the Civil Service.

The Committee further notes the important role of the Fiji Learning Institute for Public Service (FLIPS) in building the capability of civil servants through continuous training and professional development opportunities, including outreach to rural and maritime areas. These initiatives are critical in ensuring that the Civil Service remains responsive, professional and capable of meeting the evolving needs of the people of Fiji.

However, the Committee acknowledges that while the Ministry of Civil Service has made notable strides in advancing public sector reform, several gaps and challenges continue to constrain its operational efficiency and overall output. These include capacity limitations across key human resource functions, inconsistencies in performance management frameworks, delays in the digitisation of core service delivery systems, and persistent skills shortages in technical and specialised cadres.

The Committee further observes that institutional coordination between the Ministry and line agencies requires strengthening, particularly in areas of workforce planning, training, and the standardisation of policies across the civil service. Addressing these matters in a deliberate and time bound manner will be critical to improving productivity, restoring public confidence, and ensuring that the Ministry is fully equipped to deliver on its mandate as the central agency responsible for a capable, responsive, and accountable Fijian civil service.

I extend the Committee's appreciation to the Permanent Secretary and officials from the Ministry of Civil Service for their comprehensive submission and engagement with the Committee during the

review process. I also extend my appreciation to the Members of the Committee for compiling this bipartisan report.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, I submit this report to Parliament.


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Hon. Lenora QEREQERETABUA
Chairperson

1.0 Committee Remit and Composition

Under Standing Order 109(2)(e) the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence (“the Committee”) is mandated to investigate matters related to Fiji’s relations with other countries, development aid, foreign direct investment, oversight of the military, and relations with multi-lateral organisations. The members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence are as follows:



Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua
Chairperson
*Deputy Speaker of Parliament Assistant
Minister for Foreign Affairs*



Hon. Rinesh Sharma
Deputy Chairperson



Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu
Member
Assistant Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Heritage and Arts



Hon. Penioni Ravunawa
Member
Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services



Hon. Virendra Lal
Member



Hon. Taito Rokomatu
Member

1.1 Committee Secretariat Team

The Committee is supported by Parliament officers serving as the Committee Secretariat. These officers are appointed and delegated by the Secretary-General to Parliament by Standing Order 15(3)(i). The Secretariat officers are as follows:

- Ms. Tirisiane Logavatu – Senior Committee Clerk
- Mrs. Elesi Tabuyaqona – Deputy Committee Clerk
- Mrs. Katie Batikawai – Assistant Committee Clerk

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2.0 Background and Terms of Reference

2.1 Presentation of the Annual Report

- 2.1.1 The Speaker of Parliament, on 4 August 2025, referred the Ministry of Civil Service (MCS) 2022-2023 annual report to the Committee for review. The referral was made pursuant to Standing Order 38(2), which mandates that all annual reports tabled in Parliament be referred to the relevant Standing Committee for examination and report back to Parliament.
- 2.1.2 The Committee is responsible for reviewing matters concerning Fiji's international relations, development assistance, foreign direct investment, national security oversight, and engagement with multilateral organisations.
- 2.1.3 Though the Ministry's annual report falls outside the Committee's mandate, the referral was made to assist in balancing the distribution of workload among the Standing Committees of Parliament.

2.2 Procedure and Program

Public Submission

- 2.2.1 In relation to Standing Order 111(1), the Committee is committed to upholding public trust in Parliament, by ensuring that there is public participation and that all such participation is given due consideration. The Ministry of Civil Service representatives appeared before the Committee at a public hearing in Suva on 23 March 2026. The public submission was broadcast live on the Parliament Facebook page and aired on the Walesi Parliament Channel.
- 2.2.2 A summary of the submission is provided in a later part of this report, under the heading 'Committee's Deliberation and Analysis'. Copies of the written submission can be obtained from the online Appendices of the report, which can be accessed from the Parliament website: www.parliament.gov.fj

3.0 Committee Deliberation and Analysis

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 This Annual Report presents the activities, achievements, and financial performance of the Ministry of Civil Service for the period 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2023. The report is prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Financial Management Act 2004 and is submitted to demonstrate accountability, transparency, and effective stewardship of public resources.
- 3.1.2 During the reporting period, the Ministry continued to provide strategic leadership in the management and development of the Fijian Civil Service. Its work focused on strengthening human resource governance, enhancing leadership and training programmes, improving customer service delivery, and advancing digital transformation initiatives across government.
- 3.1.3 Despite operational and capacity challenges, the Ministry made steady progress toward building a professional, ethical, and citizen-focused civil service. This report outlines the Ministry's mandate, key achievements, challenges encountered, and strategic priorities for the year ahead, and reflects its ongoing commitment to supporting effective public administration and national development.

3.2 Committee Findings

- 3.2.1 The Committee notes that improvements were made in workforce planning, performance management, modernising human resource policies, digitising people management systems, and building leadership capability across the Civil Service, which were rolled out in the 2022–2023 period with the intention of easing Government operations.
- 3.2.2 The Committee notes that 79 percent of the Ministry’s budget utilisation in the stated year was prioritised towards reform activities, with more than 1,855 civil servants made aware and trained under reform initiatives, and 296 senior officials trained in leadership capabilities, with reform efforts reaching all Ministries and Government agencies.
- 3.2.3 The Committee notes that overall performance and efficiency in the Civil Service are assessed through organisational performance reports, work plans, monitoring mechanisms, customer service assessments, and the assessment of the applicability of reforms, innovations, and initiatives across Government.
- 3.2.4 The Committee acknowledges that training and capacity-building activities continued during the reporting period, including guideline-based training on recruitment, disciplinary processes, performance management frameworks, anti-corruption measures, employment-related matters, and leadership development, with close to 2,000 civil servants reached through partner-agency sessions.
- 3.2.5 The Committee notes the establishment and rollout of digital systems, including the Human Resource Management Information System, the online recruitment portal, online payroll, leave and performance management systems, and the Customer Management System at the Government Services Centre. The Committee further notes that this system captures inquiries, complaints, positive feedback and public concerns, with a recorded decline in complaints from 21 percent to 16 percent in the following year.
- 3.2.6 The Committee notes that the Ministry continues to promote ethics, discipline, and employee wellbeing through awareness of the Code of Conduct and the Values of Government under the General Orders of 2011, supported by disciplinary and grievance pathways, conflict-of-interest declarations, audit oversight, and leadership mentoring and supervision.
- 3.2.7 The Committee notes that challenges continue to arise in the reform process, including staffing shortages, limited availability of qualified applicants, labour market competition, and the inability to fully resource all zones reflected in trend analysis.
- 3.2.8 The Committee notes the upward trend in the size of the Civil Service, exceeding 30,000 officers, while also noting approximately 2,400 vacancies representing a vacancy rate of about

10 percent, largely attributable to positions previously placed on hold during the COVID-19 period and continuing recruitment constraints.

- 3.2.9 The Committee notes that the Performance Management System has undergone review, with continuing challenges in rewarding good and high performance through remuneration. The Committee finds that the absence of monetary rewards affects employee motivation and requires further review.
- 3.2.10 The Committee notes existing funding constraints, delays in implementing planned activities, savings arising from unfilled vacancies, reduced customer service operating hours, and the redirection of funds during the transition out of COVID-19, with budget utilisation rates viewed as appropriate under the circumstances.
- 3.2.11 The Committee notes ongoing risks relating to governance, recruitment and retention, employee wellbeing, traffic congestion, and the need for flexible work arrangements. The Committee further notes the need for appropriate recommendations arising from the functional review to support right-sizing and service efficiency.
- 3.2.12 The Committee finds that the figure of 1,855 civil servants referred to in the Ministry's presentation relates to officers who were trained and capacity-built on Government guidelines and policies, and not to new recruits, representing a relatively small proportion of the total Civil Service establishment of approximately 28,000 officers during the period under review.
- 3.2.13 The Committee finds that recruitment during the period under review was conducted under the Open Merit Recruitment System, now referred to as the Recruitment Policy, with no substantive change to its requirements. The Committee notes evidence that transparency is maintained through interview panels, conflict-of-interest declarations, and approval by Permanent Secretaries and Ministers.
- 3.2.14 The Committee notes that interview panellists are required to declare conflicts of interest or potential bias prior to participation. The Committee finds that this process is intended to mitigate favouritism, nepotism, and perceived ethnicity-based bias in recruitment decisions.
- 3.2.15 The Committee finds that applicants are informed of recruitment outcomes but are not provided with detailed scoring criteria. The Committee notes the existence of a procedural review mechanism through the Public Service Commission for applicants who believe recruitment processes were not properly followed.
- 3.2.16 The Committee finds that public perceptions of ethnicity-based appointments and favouritism persist. The Committee notes that reliance is placed on formal recruitment policy and approving authorities but observes limited proactive public communication addressing these perceptions.

- 3.2.17 The Committee finds that salary step placement for new recruits is determined by interview performance, while progression of existing officers depends on job evaluation outcomes and internal Ministry processes. The Committee notes concerns raised regarding senior officers remaining on Step 1 while junior or newly recruited officers are placed on higher steps.
- 3.2.18 The Committee finds that salary step movement under the Performance Management Framework is currently on hold due to financial constraints. The Committee notes that the absence of step progression and cost-of-living adjustments has resulted in income stagnation despite rising living costs.
- 3.2.19 The Committee finds that 29 Ministries were assessed under the Customer Service Guideline using criteria including response times for emails, phone calls, and reception services. The Committee notes that assessment results were shared by PSC to all the Ministries
- 3.2.20 The Committee finds that while complaint reductions were recorded through the Government Services Centre system, public awareness and advocacy regarding the 157-customer service platform remain limited, and the Ministry acknowledged that improvements are required.
- 3.2.21 The Committee finds that the Ministry of Civil Service has an internal whistleblower policy, but notes uncertainty regarding similar policies across other Ministries. The Committee notes reliance on grievance pathways through the Public Service Commission and the existence of Government-wide Anti-Bullying and Anti-Discrimination Guidelines, while finding that reporting and publication of harassment and bullying cases require improvement.
- 3.2.22 The Committee finds that training being developed by the recently established Fiji Learning Institute for Public Service (FLIPS) includes policy, grievance, and anti-bullying modules and is accessible to civil servants in rural and maritime areas.
- 3.2.23 The Committee finds that the flexible work policy is currently being piloted in six Ministries and remains under review by the Public Service Commission, with full rollout anticipated by the end of the year as a means of addressing commuting and traffic-related challenges.
- 3.2.24 The Committee notes that the Ministry identified as its principal challenges:
- the absence of financial rewards and performance-linked remuneration;
 - constraints arising from the Civil Service functional review; and
 - the need to strengthen continuous capacity building through FLIPS to improve effectiveness and service delivery.
- 3.2.25 The Committee notes with concern that sector-specific remuneration matters, including teacher pay upgrades and medical staff overtime payments, continue to fall under the responsibility of the respective sector Ministries, with only policy and procedural guidance provided by the Ministry of Civil Service. The Committee considers that this arrangement may contribute to

inconsistencies and delays in addressing critical workforce remuneration issues across key sectors.

4.0 Recommendations

- 4.1 That the Ministry of Civil Service continue to strengthen and institutionalise public service reform initiatives, including workforce planning, performance management, human resource policy modernisation, digital transformation, and leadership development, to ensure sustained improvements in Government operations and service delivery. (*reference 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.3*)
- 4.2 That the Ministry expand the scope and reach of training and capacity-building programmes through the Fiji Learning Institute for Public Service (FLIPS), ensuring equitable access for civil servants across all divisions, including rural and maritime areas. (*reference 3.2.4, 3.2.22*)
- 4.4. That the Ministry ensure full utilisation and integration of the Human Resource Management Information System, online recruitment portal, and Customer Management System by all Ministries, so as to improve efficiency, transparency, and service responsiveness. (*reference 3.2.5*)
- 4.5 That the Ministry strengthen public awareness and advocacy initiatives for the 157 helpline, a 24-hour customer service platform and consider greater disclosure of Customer Service Guideline assessment outcomes to enhance public confidence in Government services. (*reference 3.2.19, 3.2.20*)
- 4.6 That the Ministry, in collaboration with the Public Service Commission, review and strengthen Government-wide mechanisms for whistleblower protection, grievance handling, and reporting of harassment and bullying cases. (*reference 3.2.6, 3.2.21*)
- 4.7 The Committee further recommends continued reinforcement of ethics awareness, leadership accountability, and compliance with the Code of Conduct and Values of Government under the General Orders of 2011. (*reference 3.2.6*)
- 4.8 That the Ministry develop targeted strategies to address staffing shortages and recruitment challenges, including labour market constraints, while ensuring transparency and consistency in the application of the Recruitment Policy. (*reference 3.2.7, 3.2.8, 3.2.12 and 3.2.13*)
- 4.9 The Ministry strengthen communication with applicants and the public on recruitment processes, conflict-of-interest safeguards, and procedural review mechanisms, with a view to addressing persistent perceptions of bias and favouritism. (*reference 3.2.14, 3.2.15 and 3.2.16*)
- 4.10 That the Ministry review salary step placement practices and the Performance Management Framework, including issues relating to remuneration, equity, and motivation, and consider appropriate measures when fiscal conditions permit. (*reference 3.2.9, 3.2.17 and 3.2.18*)

- 4.11 That the Ministry improve forward planning and prioritisation of reform activities to minimise implementation delays and address governance and workforce risks. (*reference 3.2.10 and 3.2.11*)
- 4.12 That the Ministry ensure the timely completion of the Civil Service functional review and that its findings inform right-sizing, resource allocation, and service efficiency improvements across Government. (*reference 3.2.24*)
- 4.13 That the Ministry closely monitor and evaluate the flexible work policy pilot and provide clear implementation guidance prior to its full rollout across the Civil Service. (*reference 3.2.23*)
- 4.14 That clearer guideline be provided to Ministries and the public outlining the respective responsibilities of sector Ministries and the Ministry of Civil Service in relation to sector-specific pay and conditions of service. (*reference 3.2.25*)

5.0 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- 5.1 The Committee finds that the Ministry of Civil Service is undergoing a significant transformation aimed at enhancing efficiency, accountability, and institutional capability, through workforce planning reforms, leadership development, digital transformation initiatives, improved customer service mechanisms, and the strengthening of governance and ethical standards across the Civil Service, which aligns with the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

5.1.1 SDG 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing

The Committee finds that the Ministry continues to promote employee wellbeing through occupational health and safety measures, wellness programmes, flexible work policy initiatives and grievance mechanisms. The Committee further notes the importance of maintaining safe and supportive workplaces that are free from bullying and harassment.

5.1.2 SDG 4 – Quality Education

The Committee finds that the Fiji Learning Institute for Public Service (FLIPS) continues to play an important role in enhancing the skills and professional development of civil servants through leadership, policy and guideline-based training programmes. The Committee further notes the Ministry's efforts to expand training outreach to civil servants in rural and maritime areas.

5.1.3 SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth

The Committee finds that the Ministry of Civil Service continues to strengthen workforce planning, recruitment processes, leadership development and capacity building initiatives across the Civil Service. The Committee further notes the challenges associated with staff retention, labour market competition, vacancy rates and the absence of performance-based financial rewards, which continue to affect employee motivation and workforce stability.

5.1.4 SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

The Committee notes the Ministry's progress in advancing digital transformation initiatives through the implementation of the Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS), online recruitment platforms and customer management systems. The Committee finds that these initiatives contribute towards improving efficiency, accessibility and monitoring within the Civil Service.

5.1.5 SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

The Committee notes the Ministry's efforts to promote transparency, accountability and ethical conduct through recruitment guidelines, disciplinary procedures, grievance

pathways, conflict of interest declarations and customer service assessments. The Committee further finds that concerns relating to workplace bullying, harassment, whistleblower protection and reporting mechanisms require continued attention to strengthen integrity and public confidence in Government institutions.

6.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the Committee acknowledges the Ministry of Civil Service for its ongoing efforts in strengthening public sector governance, workforce planning, leadership development, and digital transformation across the Civil Service. The Committee notes the Ministry's progress in implementing key reforms, including the rollout of the Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS), enhancement of training through the Fiji Learning Institute for Public Service (FLIPS), and the continued promotion of ethics, accountability and customer service standards within Government Ministries.

The Committee further notes the challenges highlighted by the Ministry, particularly in relation to staffing shortages, recruitment and retention, funding constraints, performance-based remuneration, and workplace wellbeing matters such as bullying and harassment. The Committee recognises that these issues require continued policy attention and coordinated action to ensure an efficient, professional and motivated Civil Service.

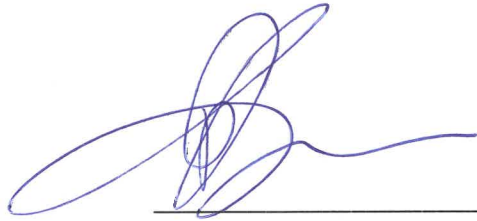
The Committee finds that while important reforms are underway, there remains a need to strengthen transparency, employee protection mechanisms, public awareness of grievance platforms, and performance management systems across the Civil Service. The Committee also acknowledges the Ministry's commitment towards improving governance structures, modernising HR policies, and undertaking the functional review of the Civil Service to enhance service delivery outcomes.

Accordingly, the Committee commends the Ministry of Civil Service for its commitment to improving public administration and encourages the Ministry to continue working collaboratively with relevant stakeholders to address existing gaps and further strengthen the effectiveness, integrity and responsiveness of the Civil Service for the benefit of all Fijians.

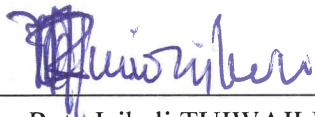
7.0 Committee Members' Signatures



Hon. Lenora QEREQERETABUA
Chairperson



Hon. Rinesh SHARMA
Deputy Chairperson



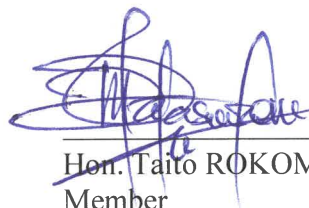
Hon. Ratu Isikeli TUIWAILEVU
Member



Hon. Penioni RAVUNAWA
Member



Hon. Virendra LAL
Member



Hon. Taito ROKOMATU
Member

8.0 Annexure

Published evidence

Written evidence, transcripts, and supporting documents can be viewed on the Parliament website at the following link:

<https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-foreign-affairs-and-defence/>