



STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE

Consolidated Review Report of the Rakiraki Town Council January to July 2020 and 2020-2021 Annual Reports



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
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Acronyms

CBD	Central Business District
CCTV	closed-circuit television
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency

Chairperson's Foreword

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, I am pleased to present this Consolidated Review Report of the Rakiraki Town Council January to July 2020 and 2020–2021 Annual Reports, referred to the Committee by the Honourable Speaker pursuant to Standing Order 38(2). While the Rakiraki Town Council falls outside the Committee's substantive mandate, the referral reflects Parliament's commitment to ensuring the timely examination of annual reports and strengthening accountability across all public institutions. Throughout the review, the Committee remained guided by its responsibility to scrutinise the Council's performance, assess the effective use of public resources and identify opportunities to improve governance and service delivery.

The Committee acknowledges that the reporting period presented unprecedented challenges. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, successive tropical cyclones and increasing climate-related risks placed considerable pressure on the Council's financial resources, infrastructure and operational capacity. Despite these constraints, the Committee found that the Council continued to discharge its statutory responsibilities, maintain sound financial management and governance practices, and deliver essential municipal services to the people of Rakiraki. The Committee particularly commends the Council's efforts in maintaining public health services, strengthening environmental management, supporting local economic activity through the Rakiraki Market and investing in initiatives that enhance community resilience.

At the same time, the Committee identified several longstanding issues that require stronger strategic attention. Delays in progressing key development initiatives, including flood mitigation infrastructure, the Waimicia Satellite Town, municipal boundary extension, waste management improvements and other capital projects, continue to constrain the municipality's long-term social and economic development. The Committee considers that addressing these challenges will require stronger coordination between the Rakiraki Town Council, the Ministry of Local Government and other relevant Government agencies, together with sustainable investment and more efficient project implementation mechanisms.

The Committee further acknowledges that the Annual Reports under review relate to the 2020 and 2020–2021 reporting periods and, consequently, some of the operational arrangements, administrative processes, policies and initiatives examined may have since changed, been strengthened or be in the process of improvement. This time lapse necessarily limits the extent to which the Committee can make recommendations on matters that may already have been addressed or are currently being implemented. Accordingly, the Committee's recommendations should be considered in the context of the Council's current operating environment and are intended, where relevant, to reinforce ongoing improvements and address matters that remain outstanding.

The recommendations contained in this Report are therefore intended to support practical and achievable improvements that will strengthen institutional effectiveness, climate resilience, infrastructure planning, service delivery and financial sustainability.

On behalf of the Committee, I extend our sincere appreciation to the Rakiraki Town Council and the Ministry of Local Government who participated in the Committee's review through written submissions, public hearings and the provision of additional information.

I also acknowledge the dedication of the Committee Members in their deliberations and contribution towards the compilation of 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 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

Supporting the Committee in its work is a group of dedicated 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

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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 8 August 2025, referred the Rakiraki Town Council January to July 2020 and 2020-2021 Annual Reports 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 The Rakiraki Town Council Annual Reports falls outside the Committee's mandate, but the referral was made to assist in balancing the distribution of workload among the Standing Committees of Parliament.

2.2 Procedure and Programme

Public Submission

- 2.2.1 In accordance with Standing Order 111(1), the Committee is committed to upholding public trust in Parliament by ensuring meaningful public participation and that all contributions are given due consideration. In this regard, representatives of the Rakiraki Town Council appeared before the Committee at a virtual public hearing held on 15 June 2026, alongside representatives from the Ministry of Local Government, the Council's line ministry, who attended in person. The proceedings were broadcast live on the Parliament's 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 and the verbatim from the public hearing 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 report presents a summary and analysis of the Rakiraki Town Council January to July 2020 and 2020-2021 Annual Reports. It highlights key achievements, challenges, and provides recommendations for improvement to support the mandate of the Council.
- 3.1.2 The principal activity of the Council is to provide and manage local services that keep the town clean, safe, healthy and functioning well.
- 3.1.3 The Rakiraki Town Council is responsible for the formulation and implementation of municipal by-laws and town planning policies to ensure the effective governance and sustainable development of the municipality. In carrying out its mandate, the Council delivers a range of core functions encompassing corporate administration, local government services, commercial and market operations, investment promotion, and revenue generation initiatives.
- 3.1.4 The Council's responsibilities include overseeing financial management, budgeting, strategic planning, human resource management, and the implementation of relevant legislation and regulatory frameworks. It also facilitates public transport services through the provision of commercial vehicle stands, manages market operations to ensure service quality and compliance with established standards, promotes women's economic empowerment through the Women Vendors Overnight Accommodation facility in partnership with development partners, attract local and foreign investment to Rakiraki, and explores public-private partnerships and commercial initiatives to strengthen the Council's financial sustainability.
- 3.1.5 The Rakiraki Town Council boundary is divided into five electoral wards, namely, Thomson and Vatumami, Ra Murti Place and MH Compound, Central Business District (CBD) and Korowaqa.
- 3.1.6 During the years under review, the Council managed the impacts of four tropical cyclones and the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly disrupted its operations and service delivery.

3.2 Committee Findings

- 3.2.1 The Committee finds that Rakiraki Town Council continues to fulfil its statutory responsibilities despite operating within significant financial, environmental and institutional constraints. The Council has maintained sound governance arrangements through annual budgeting, procurement procedures, financial reporting, project monitoring and independent external audits. Government and donor funding has enabled the Council to continue delivering essential municipal services, including market development, waste management, environmental initiatives and operational support, demonstrating prudent stewardship of public resources.
- 3.2.2 The Committee notes that the Council's long-term development agenda continues to face implementation delays. Key strategic initiatives, including the Waimicia Satellite Town, municipal boundary extension and relocation of the Rakiraki dumpsite, remain at various planning stages due to unresolved land tenure issues, funding constraints and the need for coordinated action between multiple government agencies. The Committee considers that these delays have constrained opportunities for economic growth, decentralised service delivery and future urban expansion.
- 3.2.3 The Committee finds that flooding remains the most significant infrastructure challenge facing Rakiraki Town. During the reporting period, the municipality experienced four tropical cyclones and the COVID-19 pandemic, placing considerable strain on Council operations. Although routine drain desilting continues through the collaborative efforts of the Council, the Fiji Roads Authority and the Ministry of Waterways, the Committee notes with concern that Vaileka Creek has not been desilted since 2018. The Committee further acknowledges the Council's investment in climate resilience through the construction of the \$6.2 million Category 5 cyclone-resilient Rakiraki Market, implementation of community disaster awareness programmes and support for JICA's flood inundation mapping study. However, greater inter-agency coordination and sustained investment in flood mitigation infrastructure remain necessary to reduce future disaster risks.
- 3.2.4 The Committee finds that the proposed Waimicia Satellite Town remains strategically important for improving access to commercial and government services across Ra Province. While consultations have resulted in temporary roadside vendor facilities and public amenities, unresolved land tenure arrangements and the absence of dedicated funding continue to delay the establishment of permanent market, transport and civic facilities. The Committee considers that timely implementation would strengthen economic activity and improve service accessibility for surrounding rural communities.
- 3.2.5 The Committee notes that the proposed municipal boundary extension has remained under discussion for several years despite the identified areas already possessing key infrastructure, including sealed roads, electricity, water supply and street lighting. The

Committee considers that progressing the boundary extension would enable the Council to better manage future residential growth, expand its revenue base and improve long-term urban planning.

- 3.2.6 The Committee finds that waste management continues to present environmental and public health risks. The current dumpsite in Naria remains vulnerable to groundwater contamination and fire hazards, while the proposed regional landfill remains at the site identification stage. The Committee also notes that the absence of a waste sorting facility limits recycling opportunities. Nevertheless, the Council has demonstrated initiative through composting activities, preparations for the Return and Earn recycling programme and the expansion of waste collection services into five surrounding villages with Government support.
- 3.2.7 The Committee notes with concern that previous recommendations to reinstate sustainable drainage funding remain unresolved. Despite repeated Public Sector Investment Programme submissions, dedicated funding has not been secured. The Committee notes that the estimated funding requirement has increased from approximately \$115,000 in 2024 to \$150,000 to adequately maintain and upgrade municipal drainage infrastructure, reflecting increasing infrastructure demands and construction costs.
- 3.2.8 The Committee commends the successful delivery of the Rakiraki Market, which has become a key economic asset for the municipality. The facility currently accommodates 395 stalls occupied by approximately 170 permanent vendors, maintaining full occupancy since opening. The Committee notes the steady increase in market revenue from \$92,561 in 2024, to \$98,563 in 2025, reaching \$103,148 by May 2026. Security enhancements, including CCTV surveillance, have further strengthened public confidence. While the accommodation facilities continue to support rural women vendors, utilisation has declined due to improved transport connectivity. The Committee also notes that the proposed mezzanine floor expansion has been deferred pending future Government funding.
- 3.2.9 The Committee commends the Council's commitment to environmental sustainability through its Clean School Programme, tree planting initiatives and public awareness campaigns promoting waste reduction and recycling. The Committee notes that these programmes have improved school sanitation, environmental awareness and public cleanliness, while mosquito control initiatives contributed to a dengue-free period between 2022 and 2024. The restoration of urban greenery following Tropical Cyclone Winston has also enhanced the town's environmental amenity.
- 3.2.10 The Committee finds that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on Council revenue and operational performance. Despite reduced revenue and service delivery constraints, the Council maintained its workforce through prudent financial management,

expenditure controls, reduced operational costs, executive salary reductions and targeted Government subsidies. These measures enabled the continued delivery of essential municipal services and demonstrated sound organisational resilience during a period of national crisis.

- 3.2.11 The Committee notes that the Council currently services 522 ratepayers and has increased its workforce from 22 to 28 staff following a review of its organisational structure. However, technical capacity constraints remain, requiring collaboration with neighbouring municipal councils in specialised areas such as legal services, waste management and information technology. The Committee further notes that the proposed review of market and transport-related fees is expected to increase Council revenue by approximately 30 per cent, strengthening its long-term financial sustainability.
- 3.2.12 The Committee notes that the \$300,000 Rakiraki Market First Floor Upgrade project was delayed despite funding being approved in the 2025–2026 Budget. Evidence indicated that changes to the project scope and design, together with lengthy procurement and approval processes, postponed implementation and resulted in the project being carried over to the 2026–2027 financial year. The Committee finds that improved project planning, procurement efficiency, and inter-agency coordination are needed to ensure timely delivery of budgeted capital projects.
- 3.2.13 Overall, the Committee is satisfied that Rakiraki Town Council has continued to provide essential municipal services despite considerable financial, environmental and operational challenges. The Council has demonstrated sound governance, prudent financial management and a commitment to strengthening community resilience. However, the Committee considers that stronger support and coordination between the Council, the Ministry of Local Government and other responsible agencies will be essential to progress longstanding infrastructure priorities, enhance climate resilience and support the municipality's sustainable growth.

4.0 Recommendations

- 4.1 The Committee recommends that the Government, through the Ministry of Local Government, in collaboration with the Ministry of Waterways, the Fiji Roads Authority and the Rakiraki Town Council, prioritise the desilting of Vaileka Creek, strengthen municipal drainage infrastructure, and establish a sustainable funding mechanism for drainage, flood mitigation and other essential infrastructure projects. The Committee further recommends that the findings of the JICA flood inundation mapping study be implemented to enhance long-term flood resilience and climate change adaptation planning. (*reference 3.2.3, 3.2.7*)
- 4.2 The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Lands prioritise the identification and development of a regional landfill for the Western Division while supporting the Rakiraki Town Council to expand waste segregation, recycling, composting and the Return and Earn initiative to reduce environmental and public health risks associated with the existing dumpsite. (*reference 3.2.6*)
- 4.3 The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Local Government expedite the gazettal of the approved revised market and public service vehicle fees and support the Rakiraki Town Council to undertake periodic reviews of user charges and licensing fees to improve cost recovery, strengthen revenue generation and reduce reliance on Government grants. (*reference 3.2.11*)
- 4.4 The Committee recommends that the Rakiraki Town Council strengthen its revenue collection framework by enhancing engagement with ratepayers, expanding digital payment options, reviewing debt recovery mechanisms and promoting payment arrangements to improve rates compliance and reduce outstanding arrears. (*reference 3.2.11*)
- 4.5 The Committee recommends that the Rakiraki Town Council improve the safety standards in the Women's accommodation at the Rakiraki Market.

5.0 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

5.1 SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being

The Council contributed to public health through mosquito control, dengue prevention, house-to-house visits, waste collection and sanitation activities. The Council also reported that Rakiraki recorded a dengue-free period from 2022 to 2024, reflecting the impact of continued vector control and public health awareness work.

5.2 SDG 5 – Gender Equality

The new Rakiraki Market supports women's economic empowerment through dedicated market facilities, a women vendors' overnight accommodation centre and training/resource facilities. The market was designed to improve the safety, security and income-generating opportunities of rural women vendors.

5.3 SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth

The Council supported local economic activity through market operations, business licensing, commercial vehicle bases and municipal services. The market provides space for vendors and SMEs, while the proposed market upgrade is expected to further strengthen revenue generation and economic opportunities in Rakiraki.

5.4 SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities

The Council's commitment to access and equity, including improving equal access to services and facilities for all residents, workers and visitors, supports inclusive municipal development. The main Rakiraki Market centre is also accessible to persons with, helping reduce barriers to participation in local economic life.

6.0 Conclusion

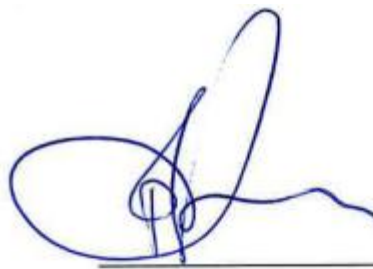
The Committee concludes that the Rakiraki Town Council has continued to fulfil its statutory responsibilities despite significant challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, successive tropical cyclones, financial constraints, and infrastructure pressures. While facing these challenges, the Council maintained essential municipal services and progressed several initiatives aimed at supporting the needs of the municipality and its residents. The Committee particularly commends the successful operation of the new Rakiraki Market, efforts to promote environmental sustainability, public health initiatives, and measures aimed at strengthening disaster preparedness and economic opportunities for local communities.

Despite these achievements, the Committee notes that several strategic priorities remain constrained by unresolved land tenure issues, funding limitations, prolonged approval processes, and insufficient coordination among relevant agencies. Challenges relating to flooding, drainage infrastructure, waste management, urban expansion, and the development of the proposed Waimicia Satellite Town require greater attention and collaborative action. The Committee is of the view that the recommendations contained in this Report provide practical measures to address these challenges and strengthen the Council's long-term financial, operational, and environmental sustainability. Their implementation will contribute to a more resilient, inclusive, and economically vibrant municipality that is better equipped to meet future development and climate-related challenges.

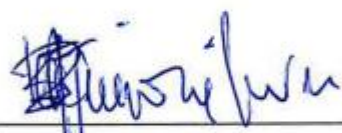
7.0 Committee Members' Signatures



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/>