



STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE, LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Report on the Review of the Statistics Bill (Bill No. 11 of 2026)



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
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ACRONYM

1. FBoS Fiji Bureau of Statistics

2.	SAC	Statistical Advisory Council
3.	GIS	Geospatial Statistics
4.	TAAG	Tans Affirmative Action Guild

CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD



The Bill was referred to the Committee for scrutiny in accordance with the Standing Orders of Parliament, with the responsibility to examine its provisions and report back to Parliament with its findings and recommendations.

For more than sixty years, the **Statistics Act 1961** has provided the legislative foundation for the production of official statistics in Fiji. While the Act has served the nation well, the demands placed on our statistical system have evolved considerably. Advances in technology, increasing data needs, and the growing importance of evidence-based policymaking have highlighted the need for a modern legislative framework that is aligned with international standards and best practices.

The Fiji Bureau of Statistics has continued to fulfil its vital role under the Statistics Act 1961 and the Census Act 1964. However, the existing legislation no longer adequately supports the production of timely, high-quality, and independent official statistics required by government, businesses, development partners, and the wider community. In particular, limitations in the current law have restricted the Bureau's ability to access administrative records and effectively coordinate data sharing across government agencies.

Recognising these challenges, Cabinet approved a comprehensive review of the Statistics Act in May 2023. The Statistics Bill 2026 is the result of that review and reflects extensive consideration of contemporary statistical practices, emerging data requirements, and international principles governing official statistics.

This Bill strengthens the institutional, governance, and operational framework of the Fiji Bureau of Statistics and promotes a whole-of-government approach to data management and sharing. By facilitating the responsible use of administrative data, the Bill will reduce duplication of effort, minimise survey fatigue among respondents (*make surveys shorter, easier, and less repetitive so people are willing to complete them and provide accurate answers*), improve efficiency, and ensure better use of public resources. Most importantly, it will enhance the availability of reliable and relevant statistics to support national planning, policy development, and informed decision-making.

As Fiji continues to grow and develop, it is important to have a modern, reliable, and trusted statistical system that helps measure the country's progress and identify emerging challenges. The Bill lays the foundation for a stronger and more coordinated statistical system that can provide accurate information for better decision-making and support Fiji's development in the years ahead.

The Committee further considered the Bill's contribution to Fiji's commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly **SDG 17**, by improving cooperation and data sharing across government agencies. The Committee also noted that the Bill would support **SDG 5 on Gender Equality** by helping to produce better data on women and men, which can be used to make informed decisions and develop policies that promote equal opportunities for all.

The Committee carefully deliberated on all submissions and concerns raised throughout the consultation process. After thorough consideration, the Committee is satisfied that the objectives of the Bill are fulfilled and that the concerns raised have been adequately addressed. While the Committee has recommended several minor amendments to improve clarity and drafting consistency, it is of the view that the Bill provides an appropriate legislative framework for the establishment and operation of the Fiji Bureau of Statistics.

I would like to thank the Honourable Members of the Justice, Law and Human Rights Committee for their deliberations and input; Hon. Faiyaz Koya (Deputy Chairperson), Hon. Jone Usamate, Hon. Ratu Josaia Niudamu, Hon. Sachida Nand and Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu.

I, on behalf of the Committee, commend the **Statistics Bill (Bill No. 11 of 2026)** to the Parliament and seek support of all the members of this August house for the Bill.



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HON. RATU RAKUITA VAKALALABURE
CHAIRPERSON

COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

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



Hon. Ratu Rakuita
Vakalalabure
(Chairperson)



Hon. Faiyaz Koya
(Deputy Chairperson)



Hon. Jone Usamate
(Member)



Hon. Sachida Nand
(Member)



Hon. Ratu Isikeli
Tuiwailevu
(Member)



Hon. Ratu Josaia
Niudamu
(Member)

COMMITTEE SECRETARIAT

Supporting the Committee in its work is a group of dedicated Parliament Officers who make-up the Committee Secretariat and are appointed and delegated by the Secretary-General to Parliament pursuant to Standing Order 15 (3)(i). The Secretariat team is made of the following Parliament officers:

- Mr. Jackson Cakacaka – Senior Committee Clerk
- Ms. Alumita Cabealawa – Deputy Committee Clerk
- Mr. Jeke Rokotuiloma – Assistant Committee Clerk

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights, referred to as the ("**Committee**"), was assigned the **Statistics Bill 2026** for review on May 2026. The Bill was referred to the Committee in accordance with SO 51 which tasked the Committee with the examination of the Bill and the responsibility to report on its findings in a subsequent Parliament Sitting.

1.2 Procedure and Program

The Committee has conducted a thorough review of the **Statistics Bill (Bill No. 11 of 2026)**. This report outlines the findings, observations, and recommendations of the Committee regarding the Bill.

The Committee examined the Bill in detail, reviewing each clause and engaging in deliberations. Following this, the Committee invited the relevant stakeholder to provide a briefing on the objectives and intentions behind the proposed legislation. To ensure transparency and inclusivity, the Committee then opened the process to public participation by calling for submissions from citizens and other stakeholders, which was advertised through Parliament's official social media platforms.

The Committee was mindful of the provisions on Standing Order 111(1)(a) and ensured that its meetings were open to the public and the media, except during such deliberations and discussions to develop and finalise the Committee's observations and this Report.

1.3 Committee Remit

The Standing Committee on Justice, Law, and Human Rights, in accordance with Standing Order 109 of Parliament's Standing Orders, is tasked with several duties. As outlined in Standing Order 110, these include scrutinizing each Bill referred to it by Parliament and review any subordinate legislation presented in Parliament that falls under its purview.

2.0 STATISTICS BILL (BILL NO. 11 of 2026)

2.1 Introduction

The Statistics Act 1961 ('Act') served as Fiji's foundational legislation for the production of official statistics. However, the landscape of official statistics has evolved significantly over the decades, rendering the Act outdated and inadequate to meet contemporary statistical requirements and international standards.

The Fiji Bureau of Statistics ('Bureau') has continued to operate under the Act and the Census Act 1964, despite increasing national demands for high quality, timely, and independent statistical information. The Act lacks provisions for compelling other Government departments to share administrative records.

In recognition of the need for legislative reform, the Cabinet of Fiji approved a review of the Act in May 2023.

Following the Cabinet-approved review, the Statistics Bill 2026 aims to update Fiji's statistical laws and bring them into line with current policies, legislation, international standards, and best practices. The Bill seeks to strengthen the governance, operations, and institutional capacity of the Fiji Bureau of Statistics. It also supports a whole-of-government approach to data sharing, helping to reduce the need for repeated surveys, minimise survey fatigue among respondents, and make better use of government resources.

2.2 Objectives of the Bill

The objectives of this Act are to—

- (a) establish the Bureau for—
 - (i) the collection of data through various methods, including censuses, surveys, and administrative records; and
 - (ii) the compilation, analysis, and dissemination of official statistics;
- (b) establish the Council to provide guidance and advice on statistical matters;
- (c) promote data quality and ensure the accuracy, reliability and timeliness of official statistics;
- (d) make official statistics accessible and usable for Government, businesses, researchers and the public to facilitate evidence-based decision making;
- (e) safeguard confidentiality by protecting the privacy of individuals, households and businesses whose data is collected; and
- (f) ensure coordination and collaboration among different Government bodies and other stakeholders involved in activities for which statistics are collected.

3.0 COMMITTEE’S DELIBERATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE BILL

3.1 Initial Reading of the Bill and Deliberation by the Committee

The Committee had extensive discussions on the provisions of the Bill and resolved that it be prudent to firstly hear the views of the public specifically the stakeholders on this very important proposed legislation. The public consultation would then allow the Committee to gauge the public’s perspective on the Bill before deliberating further, whilst also bearing in mind the requirements as set down by Parliament in referring the Bill to the Committee.

3.2 Bill Summary

By way of consensus, the Committee agreed that it would be prudent to include the necessary issues that the proposed law intends to address. This would readily give the reader of this Report with the aforementioned information regarding the Bill, which is summarized below;

Part 1 – Preliminary

Clause 1 - Short title and commencement: This clause names the law as the Statistics Act 2026 and provides that it will come into force on a date (or dates) set by the Minister through publication in the Gazette.

Clause 2 – Interpretation: This clause defines key terms used throughout the Act, such as “Bureau,” “Government Statistician,” “official statistics,” “data,” and other technical concepts, ensuring consistent understanding and application of the law.

Clause 3 – Purpose: This clause establishes that the Act’s purpose is to create a legal framework for collecting, compiling, analysing, and disseminating official statistics in Fiji in line with international standards.

Clause 4 – Objectives: This clause sets out the Act’s objectives, including establishing the Bureau and Council, improving data quality and accessibility, protecting confidentiality, and ensuring coordination across statistical activities.

Part 2 – Statistical Advisory Council

Clause 5 – Establishment of Council: This clause formally creates the Statistical Advisory Council as a body to support and guide statistical development.

Clause 6 – Membership of Council: This clause details the composition of the Council, including the Government Statistician as chair and representatives from key ministries, agencies, and selected organisations.

Clause 7 – Term of office: This clause provides that Council members (other than the chairperson) serve terms of up to two years and may be reappointed.

Clause 8 – Vacancy: This clause outlines how Council vacancies arise and are filled, including resignation, removal by the Minister, and replacement procedures.

Clause 9 – Functions of Council: This clause sets out the Council’s advisory role, including recommending priorities, guiding policy, addressing data needs, and improving quality and relevance of statistics.

Clause 10 – Powers of Council: This clause gives the Council authority to do what is necessary to carry out its functions, including forming committees and subcommittees.

Clause 11 – Meetings of Council: This clause governs Council meetings, including frequency, quorum, voting procedures, and decision-making rules.

Clause 12 – Annual report of Council: This clause requires the Council to prepare an annual report on its activities and submit it to the Minister for tabling in Parliament.

Clause 13 – Protection from liability: This clause protects the Council and its members from legal liability when acting in good faith and with reasonable care.

Part 3 – Fiji Bureau of statistics and government statistician

Clause 14 – Role of Bureau: This clause continues the Fiji Bureau of Statistics as the central authority responsible for collecting, analysing, and disseminating official statistics.

Clause 15 – Functions of Bureau: This clause details the Bureau’s functions, including producing statistics, coordinating data activities, setting standards, providing advice, and ensuring data quality and security.

Clause 16 – Statistical register: This clause allows the Bureau to establish and maintain statistical registers of entities such as households and businesses for statistical purposes.

Clause 17 – Appointment of Government Statistician: This clause provides for the Minister to appoint a qualified Government Statistician to head the Bureau.

Clause 18 – Functions of Government Statistician: This clause outlines extensive responsibilities, including data collection, coordination of the national statistical system, ensuring standards, publishing statistics, and safeguarding integrity and confidentiality.

Clause 19 – Independence of Government Statistician: This clause guarantees the professional independence of the Government Statistician in deciding methods, processes, and publication of statistics.

Clause 20 – Appointment of employees: This clause allows the Permanent Secretary to appoint Bureau staff based on recommendations from the Government Statistician.

Clause 21 – Appointment of authorised officer: This clause permits the Government Statistician to appoint authorised officers who can exercise certain powers under the Act.

Part 4 – Official Statistics

Clause 22 – Matters for statistics: This clause authorises the production of official statistics on any aspect of Fiji’s social, economic, cultural, or environmental conditions.

Clause 23 – Compilation and tabulation: This clause requires collected data to be compiled, analysed, and published in forms determined by the Government Statistician.

Clause 24 – Other producers of statistics: This clause recognises other agencies producing statistics and requires them to operate independently but in line with national standards.

Clause 25 – Partnership in data collection: This clause regulates joint data collection with other agencies, including agreements, consent requirements, and confidentiality obligations.

Clause 26 – Data integration and harmonisation: This clause promotes collaboration between public and private agencies to standardise and integrate data, with dispute resolution by the Minister.

Clause 27 – Quality commitment: This clause requires the Bureau to ensure high standards of statistical quality, including accuracy, relevance, and transparency.

Clause 28 – Quality assessment: This clause provides for regular feedback, consultation, and evaluation to improve statistical processes and outputs.

Clause 29 – International cooperation: This clause requires alignment with international statistical standards and cooperation with international organisations.

Clause 30 – Statistical release: This clause governs the release of statistics, ensuring timely publication, equal access, use of release calendars, and correction of errors.

Clause 31 – Dissemination policy: This clause requires a transparent, coordinated dissemination policy and clear labelling of provisional or revised statistics.

Clause 32 – Restriction on publication: This clause prohibits publication of identifiable individual data without consent, protecting confidentiality while allowing aggregated reporting.

Clause 33 – Statistical programmes: This clause establishes planning tools (multi-year and annual programmes) to coordinate national statistical activities.

Clause 34 – Multi-year programme: This clause requires a five-year strategic programme outlining priorities and development of the statistical system.

Clause 35 – Annual programme: This clause provides for yearly operational plans detailing surveys, outputs, data sources, and activities.

Clause 36 – Adoption of programmes: This clause sets the process for Council review and Ministerial approval of statistical programmes, respecting independence.

Clause 37 – Security of confidential information: This clause strictly limits use and disclosure of collected data to statistical purposes and protects individual confidentiality.

Clause 38 – Disclosure of jointly collected data: This clause allows sharing of jointly collected data with partner agencies under controlled and confidential conditions.

Clause 39 – Disclosure for research: This clause permits controlled access to anonymised microdata for genuine research, subject to strict safeguards and approval.

Part 5 – General Powers

Clause 40 – Power to obtain particulars: This clause empowers authorised officers to require people to provide data and complete forms for statistical purposes.

Clause 41 – Access to records: This clause allows the Government Statistician to access records from public and other entities to support statistical work.

Clause 42 – Entry to premises: This clause permits authorised officers to enter workplaces (not homes) to collect data at reasonable times.

Part 6 – Offences

Clause 43 – Offences: This clause creates offences for misuse of confidential information, non-compliance, obstruction, or providing false data, with penalties including fines and imprisonment.

Part 7 – Miscellaneous

Clause 44 – Oath of secrecy: This clause requires all persons involved in statistical work to take an oath to protect confidentiality.

Clause 45 – Act to prevail: This clause gives the Act overriding effect over inconsistent laws.

Clause 46 – Regulations: This clause allows the Minister to make regulations to implement and operationalise the Act.

Clause 47 – Amend Schedule 1: This clause allows the Minister to amend prescribed statistical matters listed in Schedule 1.

Clause 48 – Repeal: This clause repeals the previous Statistics Act 1961.

Clause 49 – Transitional: This clause ensures existing Bureau employees continue in their roles under the new law.

Clause 50 – Consequential amendment: This clause updates references in other laws to replace the old Act with the new Statistics Act 2026.

3.3 In-depth Analysis of the Clauses of the Bill

The Committee then held extensive discussions on the Clauses and identified certain provisions that merit proper consideration. These discussions resulted in the identification of a few issues, which the Committee placed as priority issues to be further discussed and deliberated on with the drafters.

Based on the initial reading of the clauses, the main issues noted from these discussions are as follows:

No.	Clause(s)	Issues
1.	Clause 9	The Committee raised concerns that the current wording limits data use to NDP monitoring and international reporting, was seen as too restrictive, and the Committee recommended broadening the mandate of the Council.
2.	Clause 9(1)(e)	The term “quality” was not clearly defined, with uncertainty over whether it includes accuracy, reliability, timeliness, and comparability. The Committee raised concerns about the use of AI in statistical work and whether safeguards should be included in the Bill. FBOS supported the use of AI as a tool but stressed that human oversight would remain necessary.
3.	Clause 13	The Committee identified a gap in the immunity provisions, noting that while good faith actions are protected, negligence may not be adequately covered, and recommended reviewing the clauses to ensure negligent conduct is not unintentionally protected. The Committee expressed concern that, while the Bill grants FBOS powers to access information, it does not clearly require ministries and agencies to provide data within specified timeframes. The Committee suggested introducing mandatory data-sharing obligations, deadlines, and penalties for non-compliance, a proposal that was supported by FBOS due to ongoing challenges in obtaining data from agencies.
4.	Clause 19	The Committee raised concerns about past disputes over official statistics and whether section 19 adequately protects the Government Statistician from political interference, with FBOS acknowledging the need to strengthen independence, align with UN principles, and clarify authority over official statistics, and the Committee supporting stronger safeguards regardless of changes in government.

		The Committee questioned whether FBOS confidentiality rules were too broad and could limit access for criminal investigations, while FBOS said strong confidentiality is needed for public trust and accurate data, highlighting the balance between privacy and public safety. The Committee raised concerns on past survey questions about attitudes toward specific religious groups and recommended introducing legal safeguards to prevent inappropriate or discriminatory questions in future surveys.
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This section summarises how the Bill aligns with Fiji's National Development Plan (NDP), which serves as the national framework for localising the SDGs.

NDP Pillar / Principle	NDP Objective	Relevant Bill Provisions	Explanation
Good Governance (Pillar 3) – Focus Area 7: Committing to Governance, Institutional and State-Owned Entity Reforms	Rule of Law and Justice - Strengthen governance, transparency, accountability, and rule of law	Clauses 3–4 (Purpose & Objectives); 14–18 (Bureau & Government Statistician); 30–31 (Dissemination policy)	The Bill establishes a legal framework for official statistics and mandates transparent dissemination, supporting accountable governance and evidence-based public administration.
Principle: Evidence based decision making	Use data and evidence for policy, planning, and resource allocation	Clauses 4(d); 22–23 (Production of statistics); 33–35 (Statistical programmes)	The Bill ensures systematic production and planning of statistics, enabling continuous data generation required for evidence-based policymaking.
Good Governance (Pillar 3) – Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation	Establish KPIs, monitoring systems and reporting mechanisms	Clauses 33–36 (multiyear & annual statistical programmes); 12 (Council reporting)	Statistical programmes and reporting requirements directly support the NDP's IME framework by enabling tracking of development outcomes and KPIs.
Economic Resilience (Pillar 1) - Building Macroeconomic Confidence and Stability	Support economic planning, diversification and macroeconomic stability	Clauses 22 (coverage of economic statistics); Schedule 1 (economic, trade, finance data)	The broad scope of statistical subjects (e.g., trade, production, finance) supplies the data needed for macroeconomic planning and economic diversification under the NDP.

3.4 Submission received via public consultation

All the submissions received during the public consultation were considered and deliberated on extensively. The main points and issues noted from the submissions are summarised below.

1. Dr. Mahendra Reddy

The submitter supports the Statistics Bill 2026 as an important step towards modernising Fiji's statistical system but argues that the Bill should be strengthened to create a more integrated, real-time, and predictive national statistical framework. The submission proposes transforming the Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) from a traditional data collection agency into a central national data and intelligence institution capable of supporting evidence-based decision-making across government, businesses, and communities.

A key recommendation is the establishment of a **Longitudinal National Household Statistical Register** that would integrate information from multiple government agencies and provide continuously updated data on households. According to the submission, such a register would improve disaster preparedness and response by enabling authorities to quickly identify vulnerable households without the need for extensive post-disaster assessments. The submission also advocates moving beyond one-time surveys towards longitudinal and time-series data collection, allowing households, businesses, and communities to be tracked over time. This would provide better insights into poverty, migration, employment trends, and resilience to economic and environmental shocks.

The submission further recommended creating a predictive analytics and early warning function within FBoS to help forecast risks such as poverty, food insecurity, climate-related impacts, and other socioeconomic challenges. It argues that this would enable government agencies to take proactive measures rather than responding only after problems emerge. To improve transparency and support research, the submission also suggests an open data approach, providing researchers, policymakers, and the public with access to anonymised statistical data while maintaining appropriate confidentiality safeguards.

In addition, the submitter recommended that FBoS be responsible for a National Data Literacy Programme aimed at improving public understanding and use of statistics. The submission also calls for the expansion of village, settlement, district, and municipal-level statistics to strengthen local planning and decision-making. Recognising the increasing role of technology in statistical systems, the submission advocates the integration of geospatial statistics, including GIS, satellite imagery, and spatial analysis, to support disaster management, environmental monitoring, and development planning.

The submission also proposes strengthening the independence of the Government Statistician through merit-based appointments, fixed terms of office, and protections against arbitrary removal. It further recommends broadening the membership of the Statistical Advisory Council to include representatives from universities, research institutions, the private sector, and civil society organisations. To improve coordination across government agencies, the submission advocates establishing a National Data Integration Framework using common identifiers for households, businesses, and properties to enhance interoperability and data sharing.

Finally, the submission recommended the development of a National Data Portal that would provide public access to datasets, dashboards, visualisation tools, improving accessibility and transparency of official statistics.

Overall, the submission concludes that these reforms would align Fiji's statistical system with international best practices and position FBoS as a modern, integrated, and forward-looking institution capable of supporting disaster response, economic management, social protection, and evidence-based policymaking.

1.1 Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) response to Dr. Reddy

FBoS generally supported the intent of many recommendations provided by the submitter but noted that several proposals would require significant financial resources, technical capacity, institutional arrangements, stakeholder consultation, and further policy consideration before implementation. Consequently, FBoS recommended that many of the proposals be referred to the proposed Statistical Advisory Council (SAC) and considered under the Fiji Strategy for the Development of Statistics (FSDS).

FBoS supported the objectives behind the following recommendations but did not recommend their incorporation into the Bill at this stage:

FBoS supported the broader objective of strengthening longitudinal and time-series microdata systems to better analyse socio-economic trends over time, but considered that detailed operational requirements should be pursued through future statistical development strategies rather than legislative provisions.

With respect to predictive analytics and early warning functions, FBoS recognised the value of forecasting emerging economic, social, and environmental risks. However, it did not support the inclusion of such functions in the Bill.

Regarding access to anonymised microdata, FBoS supported improving data accessibility for researchers and other users while maintaining strict confidentiality protections. The Bureau noted that existing mechanisms already facilitate access to anonymised datasets and considered the current legislative provisions sufficiently flexible to balance accessibility with privacy obligations.

FBoS also agreed on the importance of strengthening local government and village-level statistics to support planning and resource allocation at the sub-national level. Nevertheless, it did not consider it necessary to impose specific legislative requirements, preferring to retain flexibility in determining statistical outputs according to national priorities and resource availability. Likewise, the Bureau recognised the significant potential benefits of a National Data Integration Framework, including improved interoperability between government databases and enhanced evidence-based decision-making. However, it concluded that such a framework would require further policy development, stakeholder consultation, and investment before formal implementation.

Finally, FBoS supported the continued enhancement of its existing National Data Portal, including the possible introduction of additional digital tools and functionalities. However, Management considered that the provisions already contained within the Bill provide sufficient authority for these developments and that further legislative amendments are not required at this stage. Overall, FBoS supported the intent behind these recommendations but recommended that they be pursued through future policy, strategic planning, and statistical development initiatives rather than through immediate legislative amendments.

1.2 Recommendations Supported for Inclusion in the Bill

FBoS recommended incorporating the following amendments into the Statistics Bill 2026:

Clause 15

FBoS supported the introduction of a National Data Literacy Programme, which would require the Bureau to educate and train government agencies, businesses, students, researchers, and the public on how to understand and use statistics effectively.

FBoS supported the inclusion of geospatial statistics within its functions. This would allow the Bureau to formally use tools such as GIS mapping, satellite imagery, remote sensing, and spatial analysis to improve the collection, analysis, and presentation of official statistics, particularly for areas such as disaster management, environmental monitoring, and development planning.

Clauses 17 and 19

FBoS supported measures to strengthen the independence of the Government Statistician. This includes ensuring that appointments are based on merit through a transparent recruitment process, providing fixed terms of office, establishing clear rules for removal, and protecting the Statistician from political or external influence when making decisions about statistical methods, data analysis, and the publication of official statistics. FBoS believes these measures will help maintain the credibility, integrity, and public trust in Fiji's official statistics.

2. Trans Affirmative Action Guild (TAAG)

TAAG welcomed the Statistics Bill 2026 but emphasized the need to make Fiji's statistical system more inclusive, gender-sensitive, and protective of privacy, particularly for transgender and gender-diverse individuals. TAAG argued that official statistics should reflect the diversity of Fiji's population and ensure that no group is excluded from national data collection and policymaking.

TAAG highlighted Fiji's commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and international human rights instruments, noting that achieving the principle of "*Leave No One Behind*" requires the collection of more detailed and disaggregated data, including information relating to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

The submission challenged concerns that collecting more inclusive data would create an administrative burden, arguing that relying solely on binary gender categories can

produce inaccurate statistics and lead to poor policy decisions. TAAG also stressed the importance of strong privacy protections, noting that the unauthorised disclosure of sensitive personal information could expose vulnerable individuals to discrimination, harassment, or social exclusion.

TAAG identified three key gaps in the Bill. First, it argued that current data collection approaches are largely based on binary gender classifications, which may exclude or misrepresent gender-diverse individuals. TAAG recommended amending the Bill to require more inclusive statistical methodologies that capture a broader range of gender identities and sex characteristics. Secondly, TAAG noted that the proposed Statistical Advisory Council does not specifically provide for representation from human rights or gender experts and recommended the inclusion of at least one civil society representative with expertise in human rights and gender-diversity issues. Thirdly, TAAG raised concerns about the protection of sensitive personal data and recommended stronger safeguards, including enhanced encryption, data masking, and confidentiality measures for SOGIESC-related information.

Overall, TAAG urged the Committee to strengthen the Bill by incorporating explicit provisions for inclusive data collection, diverse representation in advisory structures, and stronger protections for sensitive personal information. The organisation argued that these changes would help ensure Fiji's statistical system is accurate, inclusive, rights-based, and aligned with international best practices.

A copy of the oral and written submission can be obtained from the online Appendices of the Report, which can be accessed via the Parliament website: www.parliament.gov.fj

3.6 Sustainable Development Goals Impact Analysis

Consideration was given to **SDG 17: Partnership for goals**, as this goal aligns closely with the objectives of the Bill. It aligns with existing policies, practices and legislation with international standards and best practices thereby modernising the institutional, governance and operational capabilities of the Bureau. It also reflects the whole of Government approach to data sharing, reducing survey fatigue and saving resources.

SDG 17.19 – Equal Access to Affordable Technical, Vocational and Higher Education

By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries.

In this regard, the Committee following its review of the Bill, fulfilled its obligation as prescribed under Section 110(2) of the Standing Orders of Parliament.

3.7 Outcome of Review

The outcomes of the review are reflected in the revisions to the **Statistics Bill** proposed by the Committee to Parliament.

We are firmly of the view that the revisions made maintain the spirit of the intent of the original bill, whilst making improvements in key areas that have been highlighted in this report.

No.	Clause	Suggested amendment	Rationale
1.	15. Functions of Bureau	Insert a new function under clause 15(i)(j): (i) "To promote statistical literacy and public understanding of official statistics through education, training and outreach programmes." (j) to develop, maintain and utilise geospatial information systems, satellite imagery, remote sensing technologies and spatial analytical tools for the production, analysis and dissemination of official statistics."	The Committee recommends the establishment of a <i>National Data Literacy Programme</i>. The Committee believes that collecting and publishing statistics is not enough if people do not understand how to use them. Therefore, providing education and training to government agencies, businesses, students, researchers, and the public will help improve understanding of statistics, support better decision-making, and encourage the use of reliable data in planning and policy development. The Committee recommends to include geospatial statistics within the functions of the Fiji Bureau of Statistics. The Committee considers that the use of tools such as GIS mapping, satellite imagery, remote sensing, and spatial analysis will strengthen the collection, analysis, and presentation of official statistics. This will support better planning and decision-making, particularly in areas such as disaster management, environmental monitoring, and national development.

2.	17. Appointment of Government Statistician	Recommend amending Clause 17 by inserting new subsections (3)–(6): (1) The Minister must appoint a Government Statistician to be responsible for the executive management of the Bureau. (2) The Government Statistician must process substantial qualifications and experience in statistics, economics or any related discipline. (3) The appointment of the Government Statistician must be made following an open, transparent and merit-based recruitment process. (4) The Minister must establish an independent selection panel to assess applicants and recommend suitably qualified candidates. (5) The Government Statistician must be appointed for a term of five years and may be eligible for reappointment. (6) The Government Statistician may only be removed from office on the grounds of; (i) mental incapacity; (ii) serious misconduct; (iii) bankruptcy; or (iv) conviction for any criminal offence.	The Committee is of the view that the proposed amendments to clauses 17 and 19 will enhance the independence of the Government Statistician. The Committee considers that appointing the Statistician through a transparent and merit-based process, providing security of tenure, and protecting the office from undue influence will help ensure that official statistics are produced and published in an impartial and professional manner. These measures will strengthen the credibility, integrity, and public confidence in Fiji's official statistics.
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3.	19. Independence of Government Statistician	Add a new paragraph – subclause (c): “19(c) The Government Statistician must not be subject to direction by the Minister or any other person in relation to statistical methodology, statistical standards, data collection, analysis, interpretation, publication, revision or dissemination of official statistics.”	
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4.0 CONCLUSION

As highlighted above in its deliberations, the Committee has conducted extensive public consultations and consulted independent legal experts in the Solicitor-General’s Office for the purpose of improving the current draft Bill.

At the conclusion of the review, the Committee believes that the proposed amendments are adequate for achieving the objectives of the **Statistics Bill 2026**.

The Committee through this report commends the *Statistics Bill (Bill No. 11 of 2026)* to the Parliament.

MEMBER'S SIGNATURES



.....
Hon. Ratu Rakuira Vakalalabure
(Chairperson)



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Hon. Faiyaz Koya
(Deputy Chairperson)



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Hon. Jone Usamate
(Member)



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Hon. Ratu Josaia Niudamu
(Member)



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Hon. Sachida Nand
(Member)



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Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu
(Member)

DATE: 17/08/2026