
Public Submission on Bills Before the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights

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To Alumita Cabealawa <alumita.cabealawa@legislature.gov.fj>

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights,

Please accept this email as my written submission regarding the following Bills currently under consideration by the Committee:

1. Rights of Indigenous Peoples Bill (Bill No. 37 of 2025)
2. Commercial Use of Marine Areas Bill (Bill No. 42 of 2025)
3. Pacifika Communities University Bill (Bill No. 9 of 2026)
4. Statistics Bill (Bill No. 11 of 2026)
5. Fiji Police Bill (Bill No. 12 of 2026)

Firstly, I would like to commend Parliament for inviting public participation in the legislative process. Meaningful consultation strengthens democracy and ensures that laws reflect the needs and aspirations of the people of Fiji.

With respect to the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Bill, I support efforts to protect Indigenous culture, language, traditional knowledge and customs. However, the Bill should clearly define the rights it seeks to protect and ensure that these rights operate alongside the constitutional rights of all Fijians. It should also provide mechanisms for consultation and dispute resolution where competing interests arise.

Regarding the Commercial Use of Marine Areas Bill, Fiji's marine resources are central to the livelihoods of many communities. The Bill should require free, prior and informed consultation with affected communities, ensure fair benefit-sharing arrangements, protect customary fishing rights, and include strong environmental safeguards and penalties for non-compliance.

In relation to the Pacifika Communities University Bill, I believe any new university institution should meet the highest standards of academic quality and governance. Independent accreditation, transparent appointments, equal access to education, and accountability in the use of public funds should be key components of the legislation.

For the Statistics Bill, public confidence in official data is essential. The legislation should guarantee the independence of the national statistics authority, protect the confidentiality of personal information, prevent political interference, and promote transparency and accessibility of statistical information.

With regard to the Fiji Police Bill, I believe this is one of the most important Bills before the Committee. Public confidence in policing depends on professionalism, accountability and respect for human rights. The Bill should establish independent oversight of complaints against police officers, strengthen disciplinary procedures, require mandatory investigation of serious misconduct allegations, clearly define police powers and limitations, strengthen conflict-of-interest provisions

in investigations involving police personnel, and promote community policing initiatives. At the same time, police officers acting lawfully and professionally should also be protected from malicious or unfounded complaints.

Finally, I encourage Parliament to consider expanding future consultations beyond Suva so that citizens in the Western, Northern and Maritime Divisions, as well as Fijians living overseas, have greater opportunities to contribute to the legislative process.

The laws enacted today will shape Fiji's future for generations to come. I respectfully urge the Committee to ensure that these Bills uphold the principles of accountability, transparency, fairness, inclusiveness and respect for the rights and dignity of all people.

Thank you for considering my submission. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this important process.

Yours faithfully,

Semesa Tuicolo

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SUBMISSION TO THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE, LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

SUBMISSION ON: Statistics Bill 2026 (Bill No. 11 of 2026)

SUBMISSION BY: Trans Affirmative Action Guild (TAAG)

DATE: June 21, 2026

1. INTRODUCTION & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Trans Affirmative Action Guild (TAAG) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Parliamentary Standing Committee regarding the **Statistics Bill 2026 (Bill No. 11 of 2026)**. As an organization dedicated to institutional accountability, human rights, and evidence-based policy, we recognize that high-quality, modern national statistics are essential for democratic planning, resource distribution, and public transparent monitoring.

However, data is never neutral. If data collection mechanisms rely on exclusionary, binary metrics, the resulting national statistics systematically erase marginalized populations. This submission reviews the Statistics Bill 2026 through a combined **SOGIESC, Gender, Intersectionality, and Sensitivity lens**, focusing directly on the lived realities of Vakasa, Sian, Trans, and Non-binary (VST+) individuals in Fiji.

An intersectional lens demands that we look beyond broad demographic averages. When national data collection fails to capture fluid realities, the erasure compounds heavily for young, rural, low-income, and indigenous VST+ persons who rely on state services but remain invisible in national planning. TAAG presents specific statutory gaps, comparative reflections on prior testimonies, international state best practices, and recommendations to ensure Fiji's future statistical infrastructure is inclusive, modern, and rights-compliant.

2. FIJI'S UN OBLIGATIONS & THE MANDATE FOR ALIGNMENT

National statistical data is the primary vehicle through which Fiji measures its compliance with international treaties. To fulfill these reporting duties, the Bill must align with:

- 1. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) & Leave No One Behind (LNOB)**
Mandate: Under the UN 2030 Agenda, Fiji is committed to the LNOB principle. Achieving SDGs regarding health (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), and reducing inequalities (SDG 10) requires granular, disaggregated data that includes sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and sex characteristics.



2. **ICCPR & CEDAW Reporting Requirements:** Under ICCPR Article 26 (Equal Protection) and CEDAW, state planning bodies must produce evidence-based data demonstrating that public resources, healthcare, and protections are reaching marginalized genders without systemic discrimination.

3. ANALYSIS OF PRIOR SUBMISSIONS AND PUBLIC TESTIMONY

TAAG has monitored public and civil society perspectives regarding Bill No. 11 of 2026. We offer the following analytical reflections to assist the Committee in evaluating current public positions:

A. Deconstructing Concerns Regarding "Administrative Burden" and Complexity

- **The Trend in Prior Submissions:** Initial bureaucratic or conservative feedback may suggest that modifying national statistical registers or data collections to include non-binary gender parameters or SOGIESC indicators creates an excessive "administrative burden" or violates standard regional classifications.
- **TAAG's Intersectional Analysis:** TAAG notes that continuing to collect flawed, strictly binary data creates a far greater economic and administrative burden by rendering public service delivery inefficient. When national statistics fail to map where vulnerable VST+ youth or low-income gender-diverse individuals reside, public health programs, housing schemes, and employment resources fail to reach those who need them most. Inclusivity is not an administrative burden; it is a prerequisite for statistical accuracy and fiscal efficiency.

B. Strengthening Civil Society Demands for "Data Privacy and Autonomy"

- **The Trend in Prior Submissions:** Diverse civil society actors and legal groups have emphasized the need for absolute confidentiality, strict data protection, and clear limits on state surveillance within Part 6 (Confidentiality and Disclosure, Clauses 37–39).
- **TAAG's Intersectional Analysis:** TAAG strongly echoes and reinforces these calls for absolute privacy. For VST+ and gender-diverse individuals, a breach of data confidentiality is not just a privacy issue—it is a significant safety hazard. Inadvertently exposing or mismatched legal-vs-lived gender data can lead to targeted harassment, employment termination, or institutional violence. TAAG's recommendations provide the precise safeguards required to protect sensitive personal parameters under the Act.

4. CORE GAPS, INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Gap 1: Mandatory Binary Classification in Statistical Registers (Part 3 & Part 4)



- **The Issue:** Clause 16 mandates the establishment of a "Statistical register" and Clause 22 outlines the "Matters on which official statistics may be produced." However, the current framework implicitly structures data collection around binary configurations of sex and gender. This forces trans and non-binary individuals to misreport their realities, skewing national demographic accuracy.
- **Intersectional & Sensitivity Lens:** For young trans individuals or low-income VST+ populations who may not possess updated formal legal markers, rigid binary collection forms completely erase their existence from national counts. This invisibility translates directly into a lack of targeted public funding for their specific welfare, health, and housing needs.
- **International State Best Practices:** Nations globally are modernizing their statistics acts to capture realities accurately. For instance, **Statistics New Zealand (Tatauranga Aotearoa)** implemented a comprehensive *Statistical Standard for Gender, Sex, and Variations of Sex Characteristics*, separating "sex assigned at birth" from "gender identity" in official state collections. Similarly, the **UK Office for National Statistics (ONS)** successfully introduced a voluntary gender identity question in its national census, ensuring data-driven inclusion without compromising data integrity.
- **Recommendation:** Insert an explicit inclusive metric instruction within Clause 22:

"In compiling and tabulating official statistics under this section, the Bureau must utilize data collection methodologies that allow for the accurate capture of diverse gender identities, expressions, and sex characteristics beyond strict binary classifications."

Gap 2: Insufficient Diversity within the Statistical Advisory Council (Part 2, Clause 6)

- **The Issue:** Clause 5 establishes the Statistical Advisory Council, and Clause 6 outlines its membership. The composition focuses heavily on institutional appointments from ministries and economic sectors, entirely lacking mandates for human rights, gender-mainstreaming, or civil society representation.
- **Intersectional & Sensitivity Lens:** Data governance requires social sensitivity, not just technical economic expertise. Without a designated human rights or intersectional gender expert on the Council, the multi-year statistical programmes (Clause 36) will continue to overlook structural inequalities, leaving data priorities dictated solely by elite economic interests.
- **International State Best Practices:** Under the **United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics**, international state best practice dictates that statistics systems must remain responsive to the needs of the whole society. Democratic states like **Canada** structurally anchor human rights data advisory groups within their national statistical frameworks (*Statistics Canada Advisory Committees*) to ensure that social



indicators—including race, disability, and SOGIESC parameters—receive expert methodological oversight.

- **Recommendation:** Amend Clause 6 to include an intersectional equity seat:

"Membership of the Council under this section must include at least one representative from civil society with designated expertise in human rights, intersectional gender-mainstreaming, and SOGIESC data methodologies."

Gap 3: Data Safety and Protection Hazards for Vulnerable Demographics (Part 6, Clause 37)

- **The Issue:** Clause 37 protects the security of confidential information. While robust, it does not explicitly define or categorize self-identified SOGIESC data, lived names, or gender history as highly sensitive personal data requiring elevated protective encryption or data-masking protocols.
- **Intersectional & Sensitivity Lens:** Intersectional vulnerabilities multiply when data across different public records are integrated (Clause 26). If data synchronization across departments inadvertently exposes an individual's trans status or historical gender marker to unauthorized officers, it opens the door to institutional discrimination.
- **International State Best Practices:** Under global data protection benchmarks, such as the **European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**, data concerning an individual's sexual orientation, sex life, or health status is legally classified as "Special Category Data," triggering mandatory, heightened data protection impact assessments (DPIAs) and pseudo-anonymization requirements before sharing across public sectors.
- **Recommendation:** Expand Clause 37 to explicitly shield marginalized identities:

"The Bureau must establish specialized data-masking and encryption protocols for highly sensitive personal data fields, including any parameters relating to an individual's sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, or historical sex characteristics, to prevent unauthorized disclosure or profiling."

5. CONCLUSION

For the Statistics Bill 2026 to create a modern, reliable, and democratic framework for Fiji, it must capture the full reality of the population. By implementing explicit gender-inclusive, SOGIESC-aware, and intersectional parameters into the text, the Parliamentary Standing Committee will ensure that Fiji's data systems align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, match international state best practices, and give operational meaning to the principle of "leaving no one behind." Accurate data protects lives, and TAAG urges the Committee to ensure all Fijians are counted safely and equitably.



TAAG thanks the Committee for considering this submission and welcomes the opportunity to appear before the Committee to provide oral evidence in support of these recommendations.

Respectfully submitted,

Trans Affirmative Action Guild (TAAG)

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Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) Response to the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights on the Submission by Dr. Mahendra Reddy on the Statistics Bill 2026

Introduction

The Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) wishes to convey its sincere appreciation to the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights for the opportunity to provide comments on the submission made by Dr. Mahendra Reddy regarding the proposed Statistics Bill 2026.

FBoS acknowledges and appreciates the comprehensive and constructive nature of Dr. Reddy's submission, which raises several important considerations aimed at strengthening Fiji's National Statistical System and enhancing the production, dissemination and utilisation of official statistics. The recommendations presented reflect emerging international trends in official statistics, including data integration, geospatial statistics, statistical literacy, predictive analytics and the modernisation of statistical systems.

The Bureau has carefully reviewed each recommendation and assessed them against Fiji's current statistical environment, institutional capacities, resource considerations and the overall objectives of the proposed Statistics Bill 2026. While FBoS supports several of the recommendations in principle, Management is also mindful that certain proposals may require further technical assessment, stakeholder consultations and resource commitments before they can be effectively implemented.

Accordingly, this submission sets out FBoS Management's response to each of the recommendations and provides the Bureau's position on their potential incorporation into the Statistics Bill 2026 and future statistical development initiatives.

FBoS Management Response to Recommendation No. 1 – Establishment of a Longitudinal National Household Statistical Register

The Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) acknowledges and appreciates Dr. Reddy's recommendation regarding the establishment of a continuously updated National Household Statistical Register. FBoS recognises the potential benefits of such a register in strengthening evidence-based policymaking, enhancing disaster preparedness and response mechanisms, and improving the timely identification of vulnerable populations.

However, the establishment and maintenance of a dynamic longitudinal household register would require significant financial, technological and human resources, including substantial investments in digital infrastructure, data integration systems, interoperability arrangements, data governance frameworks, and specialised technical expertise. It would also necessitate extensive coordination and data-sharing arrangements across multiple Government agencies.

At present, household and dwelling characteristics are comprehensively updated through the Population and Housing Census, which is conducted every ten years, supplemented by various household surveys and administrative data sources. These statistical activities continue to provide critical information for national planning and monitoring purposes.

FBoS considers that the proposal for a continuously updated National Household Statistical Register warrants further policy and technical deliberation. Accordingly, Management recommends that this matter be referred to the proposed Statistics Advisory Council for further consideration following the enactment of the Statistics Bill 2026. The Council would be well placed to assess the feasibility, resource implications, governance arrangements, and implementation modalities associated with such an initiative.

Furthermore, the development of a longitudinal household statistical register may be considered as a long-term strategic initiative under the forthcoming **Fiji Strategy for the Development of Statistics (FSDS)**, subject to future resource availability and Government priorities.

In view of the above, FBoS supports the intent of the recommendation in principle; however, it does not recommend incorporating the proposed amendments into the current Bill at this stage. Rather, it is proposed that the matter be further explored as part of the broader national statistical development agenda following the establishment of the Statistics Advisory Council and the implementation of the Statistics Act.

FBoS Management Response to Recommendation No. 2 – Move from Cross-Sectional Statistics to Time-Series Microdata

The Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) acknowledges and appreciates Dr. Reddy's recommendation to strengthen the production and utilisation of longitudinal and time-series microdata for policy formulation and monitoring purposes. FBoS recognises that longitudinal statistical systems can provide valuable insights into poverty dynamics, labour market transitions, migration patterns, business performance, and climate vulnerability over time, thereby supporting more targeted and evidence-based policy interventions.

FBoS agrees with the underlying intent of the recommendation and acknowledges the growing importance of longitudinal data systems within modern national statistical systems. However, the establishment, maintenance and analysis of longitudinal datasets and panel data systems require significant financial resources, specialised technical expertise, robust data governance arrangements, advanced information technology infrastructure, and sustained institutional capacity.

The current Statistics Bill 2026 has been intentionally drafted to provide an enabling legislative framework that is sufficiently broad and flexible to accommodate evolving statistical methodologies and emerging data needs without prescribing specific statistical approaches or operational requirements within the legislation itself. Including detailed

provisions relating to longitudinal statistical monitoring may inadvertently limit future flexibility and impose substantial statutory obligations that may not be immediately achievable given current resource constraints.

Accordingly, while FBoS supports the principle of expanding longitudinal statistical capabilities, Management does not support the inclusion of the proposed amendments within the current Bill. Instead, it is recommended that this matter be further deliberated by the proposed Statistics Advisory Council (SAC) following the enactment of the Statistics Act.

Furthermore, the development of longitudinal statistical systems and panel datasets may be considered as a medium- to long-term strategic priority under the forthcoming **Fiji Strategy for the Development of Statistics (FSDS)**. This would allow for a comprehensive assessment of resource requirements, institutional arrangements, stakeholder needs, and implementation modalities before any formal commitments are made.

In view of the above, FBoS recommends that the proposed amendments not be incorporated into the Statistics Bill 2026 at this stage. Rather, the recommendation should be considered as part of the broader strategic development and modernisation of Fiji's National Statistical System through future policy discussions and national statistical planning processes.

FBoS Management Response to Recommendation No. 3 – Creation of a National Early Warning and Predictive Analytics Function

The Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) acknowledges and appreciates Dr. Reddy's recommendation regarding the establishment of predictive analytics and early warning functions to support Government decision-making.

While FBoS recognises the potential value of predictive statistical analysis in identifying emerging economic, social and environmental risks, Management does not support the inclusion of the proposed amendment within the current Statistics Bill 2026. The principal role of FBoS is to produce objective, impartial, reliable and evidence-based official statistics in accordance with internationally recognised statistical principles.

Predictive modelling and forecasting methodologies often rely on assumptions, scenarios and analytical judgments that extend beyond the traditional mandate of an official statistical agency. Such functions may be more appropriately undertaken in collaboration with relevant sector agencies, policy institutions and research organisations.

Nevertheless, FBoS supports further discussion on the potential role of predictive analytics within Fiji's National Statistical System. Accordingly, this matter may be referred to the Statistics Advisory Council (SAC) for consideration following the enactment of the

Bill and may also be explored as a future strategic initiative under the **Fiji Strategy for the Development of Statistics (FSDS)**.

FBoS Management Response to Recommendation No. 4 – Open Access to Primary Data

The Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) acknowledges and appreciates Dr. Reddy's recommendation to strengthen access to anonymised microdata for research, teaching and policy purposes.

FBoS supports the principle of improving data accessibility while ensuring that confidentiality and privacy obligations under the Statistics Bill are upheld. As part of its modernisation agenda, FBoS has already established a Data Portal to facilitate the dissemination of aggregated official statistics and improve public access to statistical information.

Furthermore, researchers, tertiary institutions, students and other data users may currently request access to anonymised microdata through the Bureau's established data request procedures, including the completion of an online Data Request Form. Each request is assessed in accordance with confidentiality requirements, data protection considerations and the intended statistical use of the data.

While Management supports enhanced data accessibility in principle, it does not support the inclusion of prescriptive legislative provisions mandating open access to all anonymised microdata at this stage. The current provisions under Section 39 provide sufficient flexibility to balance data accessibility with the Bureau's statutory obligations to protect confidentiality and maintain public trust in official statistics.

Nevertheless, FBoS remains committed to progressively strengthening data access mechanisms and will continue to explore opportunities to enhance microdata dissemination arrangements as part of its ongoing modernisation initiatives and future implementation strategies.

FBoS Management Response to Recommendation No. 5 – Creation of a National Data Literacy Programme

The Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) welcomes and supports Dr. Reddy's recommendation to strengthen statistical literacy and promote greater public understanding and use of official statistics.

FBoS recognises that the effective use of statistics is critical for evidence-based decision-making and that there remains a need to enhance the capacity of government agencies, businesses, academia, civil society organisations, media practitioners and the general public to correctly interpret and utilise statistical information.

The Bureau has already undertaken various outreach, user-producer dialogues, training workshops and awareness programmes to improve statistical understanding among data users. However, Management acknowledges that there is merit in formally recognising statistical literacy and public engagement as part of the Bureau's functions.

Accordingly, FBoS supports the inclusion of the proposed amendment under Section 15 to explicitly provide for the promotion of statistical literacy and public understanding of official statistics through education, training and outreach programmes. This amendment aligns with international best practices and will further strengthen the Bureau's role in fostering a data-informed society and enhancing the use and value of official statistics across Fiji.

FBoS Management Response to Recommendation No. 6 – Inclusion of Local Government and Village-Level Statistics

The Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) acknowledges and appreciates Dr. Reddy's recommendation to strengthen the production and dissemination of sub-national statistics, including village, settlement, municipal, district and provincial level indicators.

FBoS recognises the increasing importance of local-level data for development planning, resource allocation and monitoring of socio-economic outcomes. The Bureau currently produces a range of disaggregated statistics through the Population and Housing Census and other surveys, subject to data availability, confidentiality requirements and resource considerations.

While Management supports the principle of enhancing sub-national statistical reporting, it does not support the inclusion of prescriptive amendments to the Statistics Bill 2026 at this stage. The current legislative framework provides sufficient flexibility for the Bureau to expand statistical outputs in response to emerging national priorities and user demands without the need for specific statutory requirements.

Nevertheless, FBoS considers that this recommendation warrants further discussion and technical consideration by the proposed Statistics Advisory Council (SAC) following the enactment of the Bill. Furthermore, the strengthening of local and sub-national statistics may be considered as a strategic priority under the forthcoming **Fiji Strategy for the Development of Statistics (FSDS)**, subject to resource availability and stakeholder requirements.

Accordingly, Management recommends that the proposed amendment not be incorporated into the current Bill but be considered as part of Fiji's longer-term statistical development and modernisation agenda.

FBoS Management Response to Recommendation No. 7 – Introduction of Geospatial Statistics

The Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) welcomes and supports Dr. Reddy's recommendation to explicitly recognise geospatial statistics within the functions of the Bureau under Section 15 of the Statistics Bill 2026.

FBoS acknowledges that the integration of geospatial information systems (GIS), satellite imagery, remote sensing technologies and spatial analytical tools has become an essential component of modern official statistics. These technologies significantly enhance the production, analysis and dissemination of statistical information and support evidence-based planning in areas such as disaster risk management, agricultural monitoring, urban development, environmental sustainability and coastal management.

The Bureau has already commenced integrating geospatial approaches into several statistical operations, including census mapping and survey activities, and recognises the increasing importance of spatially referenced statistics in responding to emerging national development priorities.

Accordingly, Management supports the inclusion of geospatial and spatially referenced statistics within the functions of the Bureau and endorses the proposed amendment to Section 15 to provide an explicit legislative basis for the development and utilisation of geospatial technologies in the production of official statistics. This amendment is consistent with international best practices and will further strengthen Fiji's National Statistical System and the modernisation agenda of the Fiji Bureau of Statistics.

FBoS Management Response to Recommendation No. 8 – Strengthening the Independence of the Government Statistician

The Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) welcomes and supports Dr. Reddy's recommendations aimed at strengthening both the institutional and professional independence of the Government Statistician.

FBoS recognises that the independence, integrity and credibility of official statistics are fundamental principles underpinning a modern National Statistical System and are consistent with the **United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics**. Strengthening the legislative provisions relating to the appointment, tenure and removal of the Government Statistician would further enhance public confidence in the impartiality and objectivity of Fiji's official statistics.

Management supports the proposed amendments under Sections 17 and 19 to provide for a transparent, merit-based and competitive appointment process, greater security of tenure, and clear provisions governing removal from office. Furthermore, Management supports the strengthening of professional independence provisions to ensure that the Government Statistician remains free from undue influence in matters relating to statistical methodologies, standards, data collection, analysis, interpretation, publication and dissemination of official statistics.

Accordingly, FBoS supports the inclusion of the proposed amendments as they are aligned with international best practices and will further reinforce the integrity, professionalism and independence of Fiji's official statistical system.

FBoS Management Response to Recommendation No. 9 – Expansion of Membership of the Statistical Advisory Council

The Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) acknowledges and appreciates Dr. Reddy's recommendation to broaden the membership of the Statistical Advisory Council (SAC) to include greater representation from tertiary institutions, research organisations, the private sector, civil society organisations and information technology professionals.

Management notes the importance of ensuring that the SAC remains representative of key producers and users of official statistics and recognises the valuable contributions that these stakeholders can make towards strengthening Fiji's National Statistical System.

However, FBoS notes that the current provisions under Clause 6 already provide sufficient flexibility to accommodate representation from many of the recommended sectors through the inclusion of representatives from local research facilities, tertiary institutions and other organisations deemed necessary by the Chairperson. Accordingly, several of the stakeholders identified in the recommendation may already be represented under the existing framework.

Management is therefore of the view that the current drafting provides adequate flexibility to ensure broad stakeholder representation while avoiding an overly prescriptive membership structure within the legislation. Nevertheless, the composition and representation of the SAC may be reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains relevant and responsive to emerging national priorities and developments within the statistical system.

Accordingly, while the comments are duly noted, FBoS does not recommend further amendments to Clause 6 at this stage.

FBoS Management Response to Recommendation No. 10 – Introduction of a National Data Integration Framework

The Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) acknowledges and appreciates Dr. Reddy's recommendation to strengthen data integration, interoperability and the use of common identifiers across government databases.

Management recognises the potential benefits of a National Data Integration Framework in improving evidence-based policymaking, enhancing administrative efficiency, reducing

duplication in data collection and strengthening disaster response, social protection targeting and development planning.

However, the establishment and implementation of such a framework would require extensive policy deliberations, significant investments in information technology infrastructure, robust data governance arrangements, inter-agency coordination mechanisms and agreement on common standards and identifiers across Government.

Accordingly, while the recommendation is noted and supported in principle, Management does not recommend the inclusion of these detailed provisions within the Statistics Bill 2026 at this stage. The current provisions relating to data harmonisation and statistical registers provide an enabling framework that may be further developed through policy and administrative arrangements.

FBoS recommends that this matter be further considered by the Statistical Advisory Council (SAC) following the enactment of the Bill and the establishment of the Council. Furthermore, the development of a National Data Integration Framework may be considered as a strategic priority under the forthcoming **Fiji Strategy for the Development of Statistics (FSDS)** and Fiji's broader digital transformation agenda.

Accordingly, Management recommends that this proposal be further deliberated and developed through future policy and strategic planning processes rather than through specific legislative amendments at this stage.

FBoS Management Response to Recommendation No. 11 – Establishment of a National Data Portal

The Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) acknowledges and appreciates Dr. Reddy's recommendation to further modernise and strengthen Fiji's National Data Portal.

Management notes that FBoS has already established a Data Portal as part of its ongoing modernisation initiatives. The current platform provides users with access to downloadable statistical tables, dashboards, maps and interactive visualisations, thereby enhancing public access to official statistics and supporting evidence-based decision-making.

FBoS recognises the potential benefits of further enhancing the Portal through additional functionalities such as expanded metadata repositories, application programming interfaces (APIs), machine-readable datasets and other advanced digital dissemination tools.

However, Management does not consider it necessary to include detailed operational requirements within the Statistics Bill 2026 at this stage, as the existing provisions under Clauses 30 and 31 already provide sufficient legislative authority for the Bureau to continue strengthening its dissemination platforms and digital services.

Nevertheless, the recommendations outlined in the submission are duly noted and may be further considered by the Statistical Advisory Council (SAC) following the enactment of the Bill. Furthermore, the continued enhancement of the National Data Portal may be incorporated as a strategic priority under the forthcoming **Fiji Strategy for the Development of Statistics (FSDS)** and the Bureau's broader digital transformation agenda.

Accordingly, while FBoS supports the intent of the recommendation in principle, Management does not recommend further legislative amendments at this stage.

Conclusion

The Fiji Bureau of Statistics reiterates its appreciation to Dr. Mahendra Reddy for his thoughtful and valuable contribution towards the development of the Statistics Bill 2026 and the broader strengthening of Fiji's National Statistical System.

FBoS remains committed to the continuous modernisation of official statistics in Fiji and acknowledges that many of the recommendations raised have merit and align with evolving international best practices. However, the Bureau is also conscious of the need to ensure that legislative provisions remain practical, flexible and commensurate with existing institutional capacities and resource realities.

Where appropriate, FBoS supports the incorporation of selected recommendations into the proposed Bill, particularly those that strengthen the independence of official statistics, enhance statistical literacy and recognise the growing importance of geospatial statistics. Other recommendations, while supported in principle, may require further deliberation and are more appropriately considered through the proposed Statistical Advisory Council (SAC), future policy frameworks and the forthcoming Fiji Strategy for the Development of Statistics (FSDS).

FBoS remains fully committed to working collaboratively with Government ministries, development partners, academia, the private sector, civil society and all data users to build a modern, responsive and internationally aligned statistical system that supports evidence-based policymaking and contributes to Fiji's sustainable development aspirations.