

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

FRIDAY, 21ST AUGUST, 2026

[CORRECTED COPY]

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FRIDAY, 21ST AUGUST, 2026

The Parliament met at 9.51 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

MR. SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Members were present, except the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Civil Service and Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics; the honourable Leader of the Opposition; the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport; the honourable Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management; the honourable Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Sugar Industry, the honourable Assistant Minister for Youth and Sports; honourable K.V. Ravu, honourable F.S. Koya, honourable K.K. Lal and honourable V.Pillay.

MINUTES

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I move:

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Thursday, 20th August, 2026, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

HON. S. TUBUNA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE SPEAKER

Welcome

I welcome all honourable Members to the final sitting day for this week. I also welcome all of those joining us in the gallery and those watching the live broadcast on television and the internet.

Honourable Members, please, join me in welcoming the Under-18 Rugby Team from Ra High School, who are with us today. The Ra High School has not arrived yet.

We also welcome the students and teachers from Naikeleyaga Village School, Kabara, in Lau. As I had advised your schoolmates and colleagues from your neighbouring village of Tokalau last year, you are here to come and see, to learn and to dream of what you can be. You are here, you dream big, and then you go back and study hard to attain those dreams. That is my advice to you. So, enjoy your stay and your visit to the Capital.

Response to Written Question No. 147/2026

Honourable Members, for your information, the Secretariat has received a Written Response from the honourable Minister for Education to Written Question No. 147 of 2026. Asked by the honourable Leader of the Opposition, the response has been conveyed to the honourable Member, and a copy is uploaded to the Parliament website.

Letter of Apology – Hon. A.A. Maharaj

At this juncture also, I would like to confirm to the House that my Office has received a letter of apology from honourable Alvick Maharaj, following my Ruling delivered on Monday this week. For the official records of the House, I also confirm that honourable Maharaj has duly complied with and adhered to the Ruling of the Chair.

FEO Team for Voter Registration Services

On the Voter Registration Services, honourable Members, the Fijian Elections Office Team will be in the Small Committee Room this morning. I believe they are already there, and they will be there until 11.30 this morning. I extend my appreciation to the Supervisor of Elections for arranging this service to all of you, Members of Parliament, who need those to register.

Partial Closure of Constitution Avenue – Preparation for the 2026 Miss Hibiscus Festival

Honourable Members, please, be advised that I have been approached and requested by the Hibiscus Committee for the partial closure of the road to Constitution Avenue and that commences tomorrow, Saturday, 22nd August, in preparation for the 70th Anniversary of the Miss Hibiscus Festival.

The proposed partial road closure is necessary to facilitate the construction and installation of stalls and other associated amenities around Albert Park. Our Transport, Assets and Security Unit, under the leadership of Mr. Asaeli Canikau, will take the lead role in consultation with the Hibiscus Committee and the Fiji Roads Authority.

For now, I will request, honourable Members, to take note of the alternative parking arrangements that have been made for you. Parking will be reserved in the area in front of the library, facing the FBC, and the Corporate and Hansard wings, facing the New Wing building. This arrangement will continue until the Festival concludes. I do thank the honourable Members for your cooperation and forbearance in this matter.

Deferment of Question No. 187/2026

Honourable Members, we will now proceed to the next item in today's Order Paper. Please, kindly note that I am allowing Oral Question No. 187/2026 to be asked at a later sitting, as the honourable Minister is still unwell. So, for the first Oral Question, I call on honourable Virendra Lal to ask Question No. 181/2026.

QUESTIONS

Oral Questions

FRCS and VAT Refunds
(Question No. 181/26)

HON. V. LAL asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Finance inform Parliament on measures that are being undertaken to ensure that the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service processes and returns VAT refunds to eligible businesses within a specified and reasonable timeframe?

HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government recognises that the timely processing of legitimate VAT refunds is important for businesses, particularly in supporting cash flow and working capital. The Fiji Revenue and Customs Service (FRCS) is, therefore, continuing to strengthen its VAT refund processes to ensure that eligible refunds are processed within reasonable operational timeframe, while maintaining appropriate controls to safeguard Government revenue.

Mr. Speaker, FRCS applies a risk-based approach to the assessment and processing of VAT refund claims. This enables legitimate and low risk claims to be identified and processed more efficiently, while higher risk or more complex claims are subject to the necessary verification and audit before approval for payment. This approach is important because Government must achieve the right balance between facilitating legitimate business refunds promptly and protecting the integrity of the tax system.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, for low-risk claims, FRCS applies automated risk-based parameters to immediately identify legitimate, compliant and low-risk claims. These claims are expedited through streamlined verification to ensure businesses receive their funds efficiently and without delay. I understand that the guidelines, standard or low-risk claims, generally target 30 days from the end of the filing month, that is, provided that all documentation is furnished and accounts are compliant. For the high-risk claims, there is no fixed timeframe as it depends on various factors, and those claims are subject to extended review, pre-refund audits, and taxpayer reconciliation before approval can occur.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the total outstanding VAT refund liabilities have historically tracked around 160 million to 200 million, with FRCS processing an average of around 32 million to 35 million in total refunds in a month.

The raw credit balance in the letter does not reflect the final payment amount, Mr. Speaker, Sir, because available credit must first be reconciled and offset against confirmed liabilities across other tax types, and those are the income tax, PAYE and custom duties. As I have mentioned before, high-risk claims remain under pre-refund verification and audit before net payable sums are confirmed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a number of measures are being undertaken to improve the process, and this includes strengthening the risk-based verification, improving the ageing analysis, as well as establishing a clear case ownership and escalation process, and better distinguishing straightforward low-risk claims from those requiring further review.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, FRCS is also strengthening taxpayer account reconciliation and verification of taxpayer and banking information. Where a taxpayer has other confirmed tax liabilities, available credits may be appropriately offset against those liabilities before the remaining eligible refund is processed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is important to note that a credit balance on a taxpayer's account does not automatically mean that the full amount is immediately payable. Refunds may require further verification, supporting documentation, account reconciliation, or further review before they can be approved for payment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, once a refund has been verified and approved, the timing and sequencing of payments are also managed within the established funding and cash flow arrangements for tax refunds, and I have already mentioned the timeframe. The FRCS works closely with the Ministry of Finance as part of this process to facilitate the orderly and timely settlement of approved refund obligations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ. - Mr. Speaker, listening to the honourable Minister using words such as “appropriate timeframe”, “high risk” and “low risk”, makes me wonder what specifically is high risk and what is low risk. Is it the more amount that is supposed to be returned as VAT return, is high risk, and the

lower the amount is low risk, and timeframe? Honourable Minister, most of the companies that are paying VAT have to pay VAT on time, otherwise, penalty is charged.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, FRCS does not realise that most of the companies use their OD facility and they have to pay interest to the bank. My question to the honourable Minister is, I have to put things into context first for the honourable Minister to understand, Mr. Speaker. Businesses use their OD facility to pay VAT on time, otherwise, penalties are going to be charged. Why is FRCS not given appropriate funds to return this money on time? The FRCS's main reason for not giving refund is because money is yet to come from the Ministry of Finance whereby, they can then release VAT refunds to companies that they owe. When is this logistical blunder going to be resolved so that FRCS gets enough funds to do payments to the companies?

MR. SPEAKER.- Can I just comment, honourable Maharaj. When you ask, you strictly stick to the question. I know there are contexts, I realise that, and that is why I allow the first part. However, I think the context has provided the question, but to answer the question, you should leave it at that.

HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL.- Yes, as I have explained before, it is the process that FRCS follows. If all documentations are furnished and the accounts are all compliant, those are low risks. High risks are the ones that do not provide their documentation, questionable verification in terms of documentation and are not compliant with other taxes as well. That is probably the only difference between the high risk and the low risk, and the timing of the payment.

MR. SPEAKER.- Can I go back; I apologise to honourable Lal because he is the one who asked the question and he should have posed the first supplementary question.

HON. V. LAL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, given that taxpayers can face penalties and interest when they fail to meet their tax obligations on time, my question is; what accountability exists when FRCS itself unreasonably delays money that is legitimately owed to the taxpayers?

HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL.- It is most probably that one of your clients that you are referring to is a high risk client and I have explained the processes and requirements for them. It will take time for those who could not be verified or have missing documentations or could not be able to be reconciled. That is why it will take some time for them.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Can the honourable Minister explain why the Government expects businesses to meet their tax obligation on time when the Government is not setting good examples when it comes to VAT refund?

HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL.- That is a requirement under the law.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, before we move on to the next question, I would like to welcome to the House, the High Commissioner of New Zealand who is joining us in the gallery this morning, His Excellency Greg Andrews. You are most welcome, Your Excellency, to this morning's meeting.

Honourable Members, also join me in warmly welcoming the members of our Medical Outreach Team and the crew who are with us today, following the recent ordeal at the sea in the Lau Waters. These dedicated health workers were travelling to provide much-needed medical services to our maritime communities, and we know the story of their survival after spending many hours in the open ocean.

My people from Kabara know very well the waters that you are talking about. It is a pretty rough piece of water. My parents already said this, “Always be careful when you sail in those waters.” I would like to introduce them and ask that they stand:

- (1) Dr. Lucy Tamani, Medical Officer, who is from Malevu Village in the District of Naviti, Yasawa.
- (2) Dental Officer, Dr. Jone Tuiwai, who is from Kabara and has maternal link to Nukuni, Ono-i-Lau.
- (3) Dental Assistant, Mr. Viliame Sasa Matewai, and he is from Levuka in Lakeba.
- (4) Health Inspector, Ms. Maca Lutunauga, who is from Nawaca Village in Bua, with maternal links to Pepjei in Rotuma.
- (5) Charge Nurse, Mr. Livinai Namani, who is from Vesidrua Village in Seqaqa, Macuata.
- (6) Peer Educator, Ms. Litia Moce, who is also from Tubou in Lakeba.
- (7) Boat Captain, Mr. Rusiate Senilagakali, who is from Levuka in Lakeba.

MR. SPEAKER.- We welcome you most warmly to Parliament. I had followed your ordeal and everyone was praying for you, so you are most welcome to today’s proceedings.

Status of Western Sanitary Landfill Project
(Question No. 182/2026)

HON. I. TUIWAILEVU asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government update Parliament on the status of the Western Sanitary Landfill Project and the remediation of the Sigatoka Dumpsite, and measures implemented to improve waste management and safeguard public health?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, before I deliver my response this morning, please, allow me to also join you in welcoming your own students from Kabara in Lau this morning.

Malo bula ragone. Kivei kemuni na qasenivuli kei na i tubutubu, keimami savakanuinui vinaka tu ena nomuni veisiko mai ena noda koro turaga, vaka talega kina na nomuni mai sikova na noda Vale ni Bose Lawa ena mataka vinaka nikua.

[We welcome you students, teachers and parents this morning. We warmly hope that you have a wonderful visit to Suva, as well as your visit to Parliament this morning.]

To our brave medical officers who survived that six hours of ordeal in the Lau Waters, we also welcome you this morning.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to pay tribute to a very close friend of mine and someone whom I spent a few years with at the University of South Pacific, the late Master Leone Karawalevu. Some of us in this House also spent time with him at the University of South Pacific. He will be laid to rest this morning. He was a former civil servant and was well known to the Marist Brothers High School Old Scholars, as well as Queen Victoria School Old Scholars fraternity. He graduated with a Masters in Marine Science from Japan and spent a few years in Japan. Master Karawalevu recently returned to Fiji in March this year. He, unfortunately, passed away in the weekend. I wish his family as well as his friends well during this difficult time.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Government recognises that solid waste management is an essential public service that continued on an open dumpsite is not a sustainable long-term solution. The

Western Division has faced significant challenges because there is currently no properly developed regional sanitary landfill serving the Western Division. This has placed considerable pressure on existing disposal sites and has created environmental, public health and operational concerns for municipalities and surrounding communities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in recognising these challenges, the Western Sanitary Landfill Project was endorsed by Cabinet in 2024, and following Cabinet's endorsement, a multi-agency working group was established to coordinate and progress the project. The working group is currently actively engaged in assessing potential sites, addressing land requirements, coordinating technical matters, and working with relevant government agencies and stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to acknowledge and express our appreciation to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for its Investors in Coral Reefs and Blue Economy Project for its funding support towards the Western Sanitary Landfill Project, which has enabled the Ministry of Local Government to progress important preparation activities.

In addition, the Ministry has engaged the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to provide specialised technical and transaction advisory support as the project progresses. This technical assistance is particularly important given the scale and complexity of establishing a regional sanitary landfill and associated transfer solutions.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the proposed regional landfill is intended to serve the broader Western Division. It is currently being planned for a suitable location between Lautoka and Ba. The preliminary assessment indicates that approximately 50 to 60 hectares of land will be required for the landfill facility. This is significant, as land requirement is one of the main challenges currently being addressed by the Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in addition to the main landfill, the project is also considering the establishment of a minimum of two transfer stations between Sigatoka and Nadi, and we intend to have another two between Ba and Rakiraki. These transfer stations are expected to jointly require approximately 10 acres of each of land. The purpose will be to provide an efficient system for receiving, consolidating, and transferring municipal waste before it is transported to a regional sanitary landfill.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry has undertaken several site visits to potential sites identified by the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources. These sites are being assessed against the various requirements for sanitary landfill, including land suitability, accessibility, environmental considerations, proximity to communities, planning requirements, and long-term operational viability. However, most of the suitable sites identified are freehold and privately owned, while some have already been committed, or are no longer available, which has further limited options for the proposed landfill sites. More recently, the iTaukei Land Trust Board (iTTLTB) has identified several potential sites for consideration. The sites are now being reviewed by the Ministry, alongside the other options already identified.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to emphasise in this august House that land identification/confirmation remains one of the challenges facing the project. Nevertheless, the Ministry remains committed to working with the Ministry of Lands, the iTTLTB, development and technical agencies, and the working group to finalise the most suitable land and move the project into the next stage of implementation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, while the regional landfill is a long-term solution, Government is also addressing the remediation of the Sigatoka Dumpsite. The remediation of the Sigatoka Dumpsite is in Phase 1 of the overall Western Division Landfill Project. Under Phase 1, the new requirement is for the lease of 2.5 hectares of land, which will bring the total area of the Sigatoka Dumpsite to approximately 3.79 hectares of land and we are currently liaising with the Ministry of Lands in that regard.

The plan, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is for the Sigatoka Dumpsite to operate as a temporary engineered landfill and remediation facility for approximately five years. The period will comprise approximately two years for remediation and landfill construction and three years for controlled landfill operations, following which the site will be closed, and operations will be transferred to the new transfer stations I have alluded to earlier. This approach has been developed in consideration with the requirements of the National Trust with the Ministry of Multi-Ethnic Affairs, Culture, Heritage and Arts, noting that the existing Sigatoka Dumpsite is located on National Trust land and is intended to be removed and fully closed once the remediation and transition process is completed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the same time, the Ministry is progressing with a necessary environmental clearance or the Environmental Impact Assessment. Screening is expected to be launched this month. Following that permission, the screening process will determine whether the project and proposed works will require an environmental and social management plan, or a full EIA.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, remediation alone will not solve the waste management problem. This needs solutions that address issues surrounding the entire waste chain. The Ministry, with the support of UNCDF, has implemented the 2Bin Initiative in Sigatoka as a buildup as a pilot for waste separation at source. A study has been finalised and awarded the artwork, and labelling the bins have been completed and discussions are underway on the agreement and shipping arrangements.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government approach is, therefore, based on both immediate intervention as well as long-term reforms. The Ministry will continue to work with relevant stakeholders to resolve the outstanding land matters and advance the project. Ultimately, it is not simply an infrastructure project, it is the public health, environmental protection and community well-being initiative.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Coalition Government remains committed to strengthening waste management across the nation through improved infrastructure, waste separation, recycling and responsible disposal practices. The Western Sanitary Landfill Project, remediation of Sigatoka Dumpsite, the 2Bin Initiative and the Procurement of Waste Management equipment for all 13 Municipal Councils and the Return and Earn Initiative are the new important steps towards achieving these objectives.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this will not only improve waste management services but will also help protect public health, safeguard our environment and create cleaner, healthier and more sustainable communities for our future.

HON. I. TUIWAILEVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for his answer. Given the environment and public health concerns associated with Sigatoka Dumpsite, can the honourable Minister advise Parliament on the specific timeline, the remediation works and funding allocation for this purpose, as well as immediate measures being taken to protect the communities living near the dumpsite where the remediation is being carried out?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the timeline for remediation work at Sigatoka Dumpsite is around three years to five years. That is once the land is confirmed. This is also to take

into account the timeline that will take the Ministry, as well as other agencies, to look for a Western Division landfill. The total estimated project cost that we are looking at is around \$80 million and for the Sigatoka remediation work, the timeframe is two years, which is estimated to be around \$15 million on this particular remediation work.

The temporary landfill will take up to five years to complete. That is, after the construction of the building that will be constructed around the areas identified at the current site, as well as the additional land that will be acquired to accommodate Sigatoka remediation work. In addition to that, the Ministry is also undertaking, together with the Sigatoka Town Council, we have been doing advocacy, as well as awareness to all our ratepayers and residents of Sigatoka Town, as well as around Sigatoka Town on the new initiative that has been undertaken by Ministry and the Sigatoka Town Council.

Recruitment Process for Medical Doctors
(Question No. 183/2026)

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services inform Parliament on the Government's plan to recruit and appoint newly qualified medical doctors?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Speaker, I thank honourable Maharaj for the question. On that note, I would also like to welcome our staff who are here with us this morning and wish them all the best in their recovery phase.

To answer the question on Government's plan to recruit and appoint newly qualified medical doctors, yes, there is a plan and process whereby Government has invested significantly in the education and training of our medical students and the responsibility thereafter is to ensure that investment contributes to a stronger, sustainable and appropriately distributed medical workforce.

As such, the Ministry's workforce planning looks not only at the current requirements, but at the doctors who will be entering the health system in the coming years. In that regard, 121 new medical doctors are expected to complete their internship by July 2027, while another 121 new medical interns are expected to commence their internship in January 2027. Therefore, planning for both cohorts of new medical officers and new medical interns will arise as these doctors progress through their training and into the public health system.

The completion of internship is an important milestone but not the end of the process. Following the successful completion of internship and the required professional registration, the Ministry will assess available positions and service requirements across all health systems. Requirements to continue through the established Government process, including necessary clearance from the Ministry of Civil Service, have to take into consideration approved and funded positions, staff requirements of hospitals and their facilities, population and service needs and vacancies across all health divisions.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry is committed to ensuring that suitable and qualified doctors are provided opportunities to enter the public health workforce where approved positions and identified service needs exist.

In summary, yes, there is a plan. The Ministry will continue to abide by the current plan that we have in terms of transitioning, in terms of employing medical students who have graduated and gone on to become medical interns, and also those who have completed their medical internship and

are transitioning to medical officers to be employed in the public health system throughout Fiji. Thank you.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for HIS comprehensive answer. For positions to be created, it is very important for people to move within the system. Coming from private background, I think you would be aware about this. Doctors, after their internship and once they are medical officers, they do go and practice in the public health sector, for example, in health centres, on their own. However, if they want to open their own medical clinic, again, they have to go through mentorship programme while they are actually practising in health centres without any supervision, but on their own.

They have to do a mentorship programme, I think, for three years to five years which is, again, becoming a hurdle. Once you have served for 10 years in public sector, you go for a mentorship for three years to five years before you can open your own GP practice in the private sector. Is there a plan to reduce the mentorship programme by, at least, two years to three years, so that people can move within the system and the jobs are created at a lower hierarchy where medical officers are concerned?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- I mentioned yesterday that the Ministry plans to review the Medical and Dental Practitioners Act 2010 that governs the Fiji Medical and Dental Councils. In the Act are provisions for what you are saying that can be considered in any review, whether a process is hindering the progress of transition from public to private, and that is something that can be considered in the review.

HON. H. CHAND.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I ask the supplementary question, allow me to pay tribute to the late Tui Vuda, Ratu Eparama Kitone Tavaiqia, who passed away last month. He was a very humble person, an outstanding leader and my good friend. May his soul rest in peace.

My question to the honourable Minister is, will the recruitment of recently qualified medical doctors address all the vacancies that we have in hospitals and health centres around Fiji?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned in my reply, the recruitment of doctors is based on the availability of space that are budgeted for, and the vacancy that is available. Currently, we have 121 who will be employed, and if we mention a number here, that means there is availability of the space. However, we are mindful of the fact that even if we continue to turn out more doctors and the number of employment space keeps decreasing, then we have to relook at how it will be a strategy to see how we can hire or employ those who are coming out to ensure that they have employment opportunities within the Ministry.

As it is, we have a good number of doctors. However, in the Ministry, we are looking ahead in terms of planning, to ensure that we keep on turning out a good number of doctors from our institutions, and then we have to also ensure that they have some opportunity for employment in the future.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, of the 121 interns who graduate every year, do you eventually employ them all? What happens to them if they cannot be employed? Are some of them taking up service in other countries, if that is possible? I am not too sure if that is possible. Are there any indications of converting all of our nursing stations to health centres so that maybe we can employ all these young interns and create positions for them?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- As I have said, 121 new medical doctors are expected to complete their internship, so graduation can be more. The numbers can be more, but as

they go through the internship period, those who successfully complete their internship period in the two years progress smoothly and transition to become medical officers.

Perhaps, 150 doctors graduated, but 121 progressed smoothly and for the others, they have to continuously re-sit and pass their respective blocks in which they have failed in, to ensure they have completed all the necessary requirements to become medical officers. That is the process that we have at the moment. I am sure that answers your question.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I think this is an appropriate time for us to take our morning break. We will suspend our proceedings, and Parliament will resume in half an hour.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.36 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.15 am.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, please, join me in welcoming the parents, students and teachers of Immaculate Conception College from Solevu in Bua. The school participated in the secondary schools netball competition at Jay Narayan College, which is very close to home.

I hope your visit today will provide you with an opportunity to learn more about the workings of your Parliament, and the important role it plays in our democracy. Welcome to your Parliament and thank you for joining us today.

Process for Obtaining Police Clearance
(Question No. 184/2026)

HON. I.S. VANAWALU asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Policing and Communications update Parliament on the process in place for obtaining Police Clearance?

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Speaker, if I may, for a brief moment, pay tribute to a young man who has recently passed away, and as I speak, has been laid to rest in the Suva Cemetery before I respond to the question. I wish to take a brief moment to honour the life and contribution of the late Captain Mosese Raloga, a son of Fiji, who gave many years of his life in service to our nation and to our people, who hailed from the beautiful island of Matuku.

Captain Mosese served for 21 years as a civil servant with the Government Shipping Services, and during that time, qualified as a captain in 2010. He had a life shaped by duty, responsibility and service to our seas. From 2022 to 2026, Captain Mosese also served on board the Youth With A Mission (YWAM) ship called *Koha*. This is a medical ship that has close cooperation with the Ministry of Health. They are now working in our seas and have just returned from Vanuabalavu and Taveuni. They are now working in Bua, Macuata, before Yasawa, and then they will return to New Zealand.

As patron of YWAM ships in Aotearoa, I had the privilege of knowing Captain Mosese and witnessing firsthand the professionalism, commitment and deep knowledge of Fiji's waters. For 21 years, Captain Mosese served the Government of Fiji on our seas. In the final years of his life, he used that same experience to help take care and hope to some of our most isolated communities. I say, "*Vinaka vakalevu, Captain Mosese Raloga. Fiji thanks you for your 21 years of public service, for the communities you helped reach, and for the example of a quiet, faithful service you leave behind. Again, to your wife, to your young son and your family, we extend our deepest condolences. May you rest in eternal peace, vinaka saka.*"

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the police clearance service is among the most in-demand services delivered by the Fiji Police Force. It not only supports citizens and accessing employment, travel and other opportunities, but also serves as an important source of revenue for the State.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a Police Clearance Certificate is an official document confirming whether an applicant has any criminal record in Fiji. This is a requirement for employment, visa, residency applications, study abroad, to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in 2024, the Fiji Police Force processed a total of 44,212 applications with a total revenue earning of \$3.8 million. Last year, these numbers increased by 8,482. A total of 52,694 applications were successfully processed, generating a total earning of \$4.3 million.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me now turn to how you process an application. This is also clearly explained in the Fiji Police Force official website. Applicants can obtain the prescribed application form from the Police Clearance Office at the Fiji Police Force Headquarters in Suva, or from selected Police stations accessed from the Fiji Police Force, or from the Fiji Police Force webpage. If you are an applicant, you are required to complete the form and provide the appropriate supporting documents, such as, to name a few, a recent passport size photograph, a certified copy of a valid photo identification, a proof of address if required. Then you submit the application, and we are required, in some cases, to provide fingerprints. Applicants are then required to pay the prescribed fee at the designated Revenue Collector's Office from the Fiji Police Force Headquarters and selected police stations.

It is important for applicants to retain a copy of the payment receipts, as this may be required when making follow-up or tracking your application. Once the clearance is processed, it will only be emailed and posted to the relevant organisation or agency that requested a police clearance. Applicants can follow up on the status of the application through landline numbers and email address provided on the Fiji Police Force official website, or the number 9905201, and not landline numbers and email address provided on the Fiji Police Force official website, or the number 9905201, and not to the Commissioner.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, for overseas police clearance, the application form can be accessed from the Fiji Police Force website or obtained from the nearest Fiji High Commission Embassy or consulate.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have had a few challenges on overseas applications. This has been addressed and I can talk more of that, but at this point in time, the details are clearly explained in the Fiji Police website.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, are there any future plans to improve the process in place?

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Government, the Coalition Government, is committed to improving all services provided to our people. The Ministry, together with our line agencies, is actively working with development partners to address concerns in improved service delivery.

The Fiji Police Force is progressing the digitalisation of the police clearance process. In this system, we are working closely with partners such as the Pacific Digital Economy Programme under this programme here, this initiative has been undertaken by the Fiji Police Force, with the support from its development and technical partners, including the United Nations Capital Development Funds (UNCDF), and the wider partnership with Web Media South Pacific, supporting the development and implementation of the digital platform.

This is again, Mr. Speaker, Sir, part of the whole Government's scheme to improve the digitalisation of our nation. The new system, when this comes into force, will be intended to modernise what has traditionally been a largely manual process, is where we are right now. Once operational, it will support the following points:

- (1) we will have an online submission of police clearance applications;
- (2) an improved access to the service, particularly for applicants who face geographical or travel constraints;
- (3) we will have secure digital payment options;
- (4) we will identify verification through approved government mechanisms;

- (5) we will improve processing, traceability, and administrative efficiency;
- (6) strengthen controls around privacy, security, and responsible handling of application information.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, Sir, a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Justice has gone through the vetting process phases, and this is progressing well. There is also work with Vodafone and Bank of the South Pacific (BSP) for an arrangement to develop a digital payment integration system to assist the Police Clearance System. Thank you, Sir.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, as the honourable Minister has spoken about service delivery, can the honourable Minister highlight on police officers' delay or deny registering a counter-report by a person who already has a medical report?

MR. SPEAKER.- Are you with him, honourable Minister? Can you elaborate a bit more, honourable Kirpal? Can you ask the same question?

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- Can the honourable Minister highlight on police officers who delay or deny a counter-report by a person who already has a medical report, for example, when someone has reported against someone and you have a counter-report, but the police officer denies registering that report?

MR. SPEAKER.- I think he has the gist of it, yes, honourable Minister.

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, may I invite the honourable Member, if he has any specific cases that he is referring to, we can discuss it and I can provide the details to him.

MR. SPEAKER.- We will move on now, honourable Members to the next Question, and I am allowing honourable Jone Usamate to ask the question that was posed by the honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Review of the \$15,000 Means Threshold
(Question No. 185/2026)

HON. J. USAMATE asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Justice and Acting Attorney-General inform Parliament whether the Legal Aid Commission is undertaking a review of the \$15,000 means threshold, given the increase in cost of living?

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Legal Aid Commission is currently undertaking a review of its Means Threshold, taking into account the significant changes in the cost of living, household expenses, wages, and broader economic circumstance since the threshold was introduced. The Legal Aid, as a background, was enacted in 1996 and commenced on 1st February, 1998, providing the legislative framework and the powers of the Legal Aid Commission to provide legal assistance. It is important to clarify that the \$15,000 net disposal annual income threshold is not expressly stated in the Legal Aid Act and was not fixed by Parliament.

Section 7 of the Legal Aid Act provides for an assessment of applicants' means. In carrying out this assessment, the applicants' income and expenses are considered, based on supporting documentation provided by the applicant. This may include pay slips, recent bank statement, receipts, and other relevant financial information. The \$15,000 threshold has been applied by the Commission

as part of its eligibility means test guidelines since the commencement of the legal aid system in 1998.

The threshold is used in determining eligibility for legal representation and assistance in criminal, now we also have family, and more importantly, we now have a civil division, as well as certain non-court matters, including conveyancing applications. However, the means assessment is not applied rigidly in every circumstance. There are situations where the Commission may take into account the particular circumstance of an applicant, including applications from convicted inmates, persons held on remand, and juveniles.

Section 8 of the Legal Aid Act further provides for guidelines relating to the provision of legal assistance. This provision, Mr. Speaker, Sir, needs to be read together with what is provided for in the Constitution.

Section 13, the rights of charged or detained persons. More importantly, section 14, the right of accused person. I think it is more important here, especially in subsection 2, every person charged with an offence has a right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to a court of law. Unfortunately, misinformation, disinformation today, and this is one of the challenges that comes with social media, as soon as a person is being charged, there is a presumption that that person is guilty.

That is not the case and that is what this Government will continue to demonstrate to the people of Fiji, and also to other agencies, particularly for legal aid. In some circumstances, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I had to ask the Director if they can provide assistance due to the severity of the case, because the cost of lawyers are so expensive in Fiji, they cannot afford it, and that is why Legal Aid was specifically created for that particular purpose.

The independence and operational mandate of the Legal Aid Commission is also recognised under Section 118 of the 2013 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji. It also is important to note that eligibility is not determined solely by the means test. In certain matters, there is also a merit test. This considers whether there is a reasonable prospect of success in the case. The merit test may apply, for example, to certain appeals, those that have already been determined by court, and whether it is appealed to a High Court or to the Court of Appeal.

The threshold in today's context, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the current \$15,000 net disposable annual income threshold has been in place for more than 25 years. During that period, Fiji has experienced significant changes in population, wages, household expenditure, and overall cost of living. The economic circumstances faced by individuals and families today are very different from those that existed, when the threshold was introduced in 1998. It is also important to note that the assessment is based on a net disposable income, rather than simply an applicant's gross annual salary.

The Director of Legal Aid has a discretion to consider providing assistance to an applicant whose disposable income exceeds \$15,000, depending on the individual circumstances of the applicant and, in particular, their reasonable monthly expense and financial obligation. Nevertheless, given the sustained increase in the cost of living and the changes in household expenditure and income level, there is a clear need to ensure that the means test criteria remain relevant, fair, and responsive to the present-day circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I support the review of the current means threshold. The objective of the review is to ensure that the threshold remains appropriate in the current economic environment, and that people who generally require legal assistance are not excluded simply because the criteria have not kept in place with the changing economic realities.

The review should, therefore, also consider that the existing threshold continues to properly identify persons who are generally unable to reasonably afford legal services. This is particularly important because access to justice should not depend solely on whether a person falls within the outdated financial threshold.

The assessment must also take into account the actual financial pressures faced by individuals and families today. This is particularly important because access to justice should not depend solely on whether a person falls within the outdated financial threshold.

The assessment must also take into account the actual financial pressures faced by individuals and families today. As the Acting Attorney-General, I indicate that current thresholds should be reviewed and considered to be given to appropriate adjustment that reflects the present cost of living while ensuring that assistance continues to be targeted towards those in need most.

Accordingly, the answer to the question is, yes. The Legal Aid Commission is undertaking a review of the \$15,000 means threshold, politically in light of the significant change in the cost of living, economic circumstances and since the threshold was introduced.

I HON. J. USAMATE.- There was a song that used to go when the Mississippi rose down to the sea –*Meandering Mississippi*. I think the question was very simple and required a simple answer and we had this meandering. Very poor!

The honourable Minister has pointed out that there is no strict application of the threshold, the way that it is interpreted. He has also talked about merit. While we are waiting for this review, let us hope it is not going to take another five years, are there any particular standard criteria that you will use so that people can have a better understanding of what it means that the \$15,000 threshold does not apply? What does merit mean? So, that people can really understand whether they are eligible for getting Legal Aid Commission assistance or not, rather than waiting for your five years, six years of your review?

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- That was a government that sat there for 16 years and did nothing. They have a memory lapse. You did nothing. Your Minister did nothing.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Point of Order! The honourable Minister is lying. Who brought the Legal Aid Commission into this House?

MR. SPEAKER.- One moment, can you withdraw the word that I hear you use?

HON. J. USAMATE.- The honourable Minister is misleading the House, Sir. The Legal Aid Commission was brought in by the former government. They brought in the threshold to have the audacity to stay in this House and claim that they did not do anything. It is absolutely fallacious.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, 25 years, they did not do any change when they came on board from 2014 until today. In terms of that threshold.

(Hon. P.D. Kumar interjects)

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Kumar, hold your horse, hold your horse.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- I am talking about the threshold. You knew very well the social conditions of people, the living lifestyle. You did nothing. The question is.

(Hon. P.D. Kumar interjects)

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Kumar, I do not have to warn you, do not respond directly to them. You address the Speaker if you wish.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, *e dau mosi na ka dina*. (The truth usually hurts)

HON. J. USAMATE.- Point of Order! Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Acting Attorney-General is saying we did nothing. The former Government took the Legal Aid Commission to every corner of this country. That is not nothing. Nothing means *zilch, nada*, zero. That is not nothing.

MR. SPEAKER.- I do accept his point. Even if they had gone around consulting without actually bringing any change, they were doing something. You know what I mean. Technically, he is correct. You know the honourable Minister is right.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Legal Aid Commission go out to the community, so when they say the people do not know, they do know. They have all offices, in all the urban centres. Apart from the urban centres, they go to the maritime to explain. The question actually is misleading. People know there is a review that will be done and then ensure that more people will have access.

There is also a reason for that. It has financial implications. We cannot grow Legal Aid. Currently, Mr. Speaker, Sir, as you will understand, as a former Court of Appeals Judge, Legal Aid is probably the largest law firm, and they are trying their level best to handle the workload. There is also a budgetary constraint. Once you increase, there are more people. However, at the end of the day, as I said, there is a discretion of the Director of Legal Aid. A review has been directed to ensure that people who are entitled to Legal Aid will be assisted.

MR. SPEAKER.- We will continue, but just before we progress further, in my last count, there were about 126 lawyers that are employed at the Legal Aid Commission, so it is the biggest law firm in town, as it were.

If I can also clarify on the issue that was raised from this side regarding merit. Before, the actual figures were described, as I recollect in the olden days, they used to apply strictly on merit without any figures mentioned. In fact, there were some factors that were already in consideration as far as merit is concerned. Perhaps, the Acting Attorney-General will elaborate further when he gets back on those items.

Implementation of Child Welfare Legislations (Question No. 186/2026)

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection update Parliament on the implementation of the Child Care and Protection Act 2024, the Child Justice Act 2024 and the Adoption Act 2020?

HON. S. KIRAN.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, when the Adoption Act was first passed in 2020, it was celebrated as a principal legislation for both domestic and inter-country adoptions. It brought the Hague Convention into our legal framework and put the best interests of the child at the centre of the law. However, as our Judiciary and legal practitioners began to apply that, they hit significant roadblocks. Unclear procedures created operational gaps. This forced us to put adoption cases on

on hold while we worked to amend the law and make it truly functional.

We have now overcome those challenges through the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2025, alongside the newly enacted Adoption Regulations 2026 and Adoption Family Division Court Rules 2026. We have built a seamless, comprehensive framework. This new system, which officially commenced in March this year, completely transforms how we handle adoption.

A major pillar of this change is a new pre-court adoption process led by the Department of Children. Before any adoption case ever reaches a courtroom, whether it involves relatives, step-parents or prospective adoptive parents, the Department conducts rigorous screening, assessment and preparation. This ensures that every child's safety and best interests are fully secured beforehand.

The impact of these reforms is already clear. Since March, a total of 306 local cases have been registered for pre-adoption processes across our District Offices. Of those, 16 cases have progressed to court filings and we have already seen our first adoption court order successfully granted at the Lautoka Magistrates Court.

Yes, this new legislation demands a higher level of compliance, deeper scrutiny and more thorough work from all of us, however, it is necessary work. By strengthening our confidentiality oversight and placement procedures, we are finally fully aligned with the global standards of the Hague Convention on the Inter-Country Adoption.

I want to extend my deepest appreciation to the Judiciary, the Department of Children and all the stakeholders who collaborated seamlessly to bring these regulations to life. Together, we have built a rigorous, protective and a system that our children truly deserve. The hold of the past five years is over, and these are being processed through the courts.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to fortify Fiji's child protection framework through the Child Care and Protection Act 2024 and Child Justice Act 2024. Our Ministry has finalised the draft regulations for these two critical pieces of legislation. They will shortly be submitted to Cabinet for endorsement, after which both landmark laws are expected to officially commence in the first quarter of this financial year, around October.

Mr. Speaker, the drafting of these regulations, alongside their corresponding standard operating procedures and administrative forms was not done in isolation. Robust, wide-ranging national consultations were held with key legal and institutional partners. It was important that the judiciary was fully included.

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Office of the Solicitor-General, the Legal Aid Commission, the Fiji Law Society, the Ministries of Justice, Education, Youth and Health all contributed. We further engaged extensively with the Fiji Police Force, Fiji Correction Services, residential managers, civil society organisations, faith-based organisations and the National Coordinating Committee on Children.

I must emphasise that these consultations were vital to ensuring seamless coordinated processes across all State and non-State agencies and this has taken its time but it is being done, which is a massive undertaking and was funded through the normal budgetary processes, supplemented by generous and steadfast support of our development partners namely the UNICEF and DFAT.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, allow me to briefly outline what these regulations entail to illustrate how they will safeguard our most vulnerable citizens. The child and protection regulations will provide

the practical machinery and service standards required to operationalise the Principal Act. Specifically, these regulations will establish strict statutory requirements for registering and monitoring child protection agencies and children's homes, outlining mandatory staffing ratios, safeguarding protocols and institutional accountability. It will also strengthen mandatory reporting mechanisms, mandate secure information management and for strict timelines so that the urgent child safety cases are assessed and acted upon promptly.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it will also strengthen family and child participation in ongoing care planning, ensuring that a child's cultural, religious, family and community connections are preserved and respected. It will prioritise safe, stable and nurturing placements by enforcing rigorous ongoing oversight of fostering institutional care environments.

Turning to the Child Justice Regulations, Mr. Speaker, Sir, this framework establishes a modern rehabilitative administrative ecosystem for children who come into conflict with the law. Crucially, this Parliament has already taken the progressive step of raising the age criminality liability of 10 years old to 14 years old, and these Regulations provide the tools to manage this paradigm shift. The Regulations will –

- prescribe standard forms and process for all law enforcement and justice sector agencies handling youth cases;
- enforce rigid compliance for approved child justice organisations, including mandatory notifications regarding staff criminal charges and granting State inspectors full access to physical and digital case records;
- detail clear procedures and referral timelines for diversion plans, community conferencing and wraparound support services while strictly defining eligible convenience and their training qualifications;
- it will standardise court-ordered interventions including social inquiry reports, community volunteer supervision frameworks and community-based correction options centred on rehabilitation;
- it will also create offences for individuals who obstruct, authorise child justice or Welfare officers or who falsely represent themselves as holding such authority, carrying penalties of up to \$1,000 or six months imprisonment or both.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the operationalisation of these two comprehensive laws represents a major structural shift. Consequently, the Department of Children will progressively require focused strategic resourcing over the next three fiscal years to fully realise the intent of these reforms. All subsequent resourcing requests will be aggressively pursued through the normal budgetary process alongside continued alignment with our international development partners.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, may I take this time, as school holidays begin today, to send a strong message to parents and caregivers. Please, keep an eye on our children and remind them to stay away from roads and rivers without adult supervision. The weather is very unpredictable, much windier than usual, and for coastal and maritime villages to ensure that children are strictly supervised when playing in the ocean.

It is very wonderful to see so many sporting activities and I know many people in this House are cheering their schools and as many of our children are growing and thriving through the sporting events happening around the country, I wish to plead with children, teachers, parents and guardians to keep safety at the forefront. Since it is holiday time, on digital front, while gadgets are an easy way to keep kids busy, please, use parental controls to protect them from harmful content.

Before I take my seat, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to congratulate and celebrate the incredible

Team at FRIEND Fiji for reaching their 25th anniversary and I congratulate them on their 10 years of successful partnership with Prouds to distribute the products. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I ask my supplementary question this morning, I wish to remember a friend of mine who had passed away and will be laid to rest this Saturday. I wish to remember Lieutenant Commander Enele Besetimoala Ma'afu, who was my mentor with honourable Naupoto. Mr. Besetimoala Ma'afu is from Naroi, Moala. He joined the Navy when it was formed in 1976 and before he left and joined the Merchant Navy. I wish him and his family sincere condolences and his friends.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, my supplementary question is in relation to adoption. What is the current average time taken to process an adoption application? Has the implementation of the Adoption Act resulted in a more efficient process?

HON. S. KIRAN.- Thank you for that question, Sir. When we brought the Adoption (Amendment) Act late last year, there were more than 500 applications pending and you will see from March, 300 of them have been progressed already. The difficulty is often in making sure the counselling level and our staff doing all the paperwork, but I will say that since the Act has come into full effect, there has been a lot of progress. If anyone has specific adoption cases, they can bring that to our attention.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the reason the Chair has used its discretion to allow the Questions to be posed by the Committee is that when these two enactments were passed last year, if you will recall, the Child Care Act and Protection Act 2024 and the Child Justice Act 2025, you all agreed that the new laws were important landmark in the field of the protection of our children. This morning, the honourable Minister has given a very important update on how they are progressing. That is the reason, if you wonder. Thank you.

Immigration Services to Wainibuka
(Question No. 188/2026)

HON. T.R. MATASAWALEVU asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Immigration inform Parliament on how Immigration can bring its services closer to the people of Wainibuka and nearby areas?

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank my honourable friend, honourable Matasawalevu, for this Wainibuka-specific question. I certainly understand his concerns. I acknowledge his continued assistance to his folks and others who easily seek assistance from immigration. Honourable Rokomatu is now a familiar face at the Immigration Office. He will not only email me, but he will physically bring people down so that they get served by our Immigration Officers.

Before I continue, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I watched our young children from Naikeleyaga this morning making their way to Parliament. I was just thinking very quickly of the first time I came to Suva, much older than them. I remember there used to be a United Taxi Base where the fish market is in Suva and we rode in a taxi to Toorak. And as we were driving up to Toorak, a car was coming on the other side. I was hiding inside the taxi. I did not understand that the car coming the other side can also turn. I eventually mustered the courage to learn to drive, and I now drive a car. It is good for those young children to make it to Parliament at this very young age.

Mr. Speaker, our fellow citizens from Wainibuka and nearby areas, including the Ra

Province, currently access immigration services if they come this way, they come all the way to Robertson Road where our office is, or if they go the other way, they go all the way to Lautoka, and that is where they access immigration services. Mr. Speaker, one of government's core objectives is to bring services closer to the people.

The immigration services that we provide to our citizens are mostly passport services from August 2016 to August this year 2026. Our data shows that there are 413,827 valid passport holders right now in addition to the passport services, we also provide services to our citizens overseas who want their children to be registered as Fiji citizens.

When citizenship is approved easily, application for passport follows. I am glad to report that this application for citizenship is now lodged and approved online through the Immigration online portal and as we know, both these two services for citizenship, it is a once in a lifetime service to get a citizenship. Once in 10 years, if you are getting a new passport, and unless if your passport is lost or damaged, you will not come back to Immigration until about nine and a half years, to get it renewed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the December sitting last year, I shared to the august House the Ministry's intention to expand immigration services from the current three Offices that we have on Viti Levu - one in Suva, one in Nadi, and one in Lautoka. I am pleased to provide a further update on the progress of that.

The Ministry of Immigration, together with the Ministry of Civil Service Accommodation Unit earlier this year, managed to find secure office spaces in Nakasi and at Rakiraki. The Nakasi Office has completed its internal fit-out and was formally handed over to us last Friday, 14th August. The Rakiraki Office is currently undergoing the final stages of its fit-out. Initially, the plan was to have both Offices operational by 31st of this month, however, due to unforeseen circumstances relating to infrastructure procurement and other operational requirements, the Ministry is now working towards having both Offices operational by September 2026, which is just in a few weeks' time - early September for Nakasi and late September for Rakiraki.

Our next move, Mr. Speaker, will be to find space and have an office in Sigatoka, to allow access for people up in Navosa, just to come down to Sigatoka and access the services there. Even this is a Wainibuka specific question, if I can just speak in the vernacular.

Na taro saka e tarogi tiko nikua na taro mai vua na nomudou gone, honourable Rokomatu, na gaunisala cava me voleka yani kina vei kemuni i Wainibuka kei na veivanua volekata na vei qaravi ni Ministry ni Curu Vanua? Au via vakaraitaka ga yani ni dina ni ko gole sara tiko i Lautoka se o ni gole mai Suva, na kena dola na Valenivolavola vou ni Immigration mai Rakiraki, ena vukei kemuni na wekada ni tiko i Wainibuka, ka vaka kina na Yasana o Ra. Ena voleka cake yani vei kemuni na Valenivolavola mai Rakiraki, se kevaka o ni gole mai ki Suva, rawa ni ko ni sa la'ki tao ga ena Valenivolavola vou mai Nakasi, mo ni qaravi kina.

[The question being asked by honourable Rokomatu is; in what way will it help the people of Wainibuka and nearby areas to easily access the services of the Ministry of Immigration? I simply want to point out that, whether you are travelling to Lautoka or coming from Suva, the opening of the new Immigration Office in Rakiraki will benefit our relatives living in Wainibuka, as well as the Province of Ra. It will be closer for you to go to the office in Rakiraki, or if you are traveling to Suva, you can simply stop at the new office in Nakasi to be served there.]

E tiko talega na neimami vei qaravi me keimami kauta ga yani kina vei kemuni na vei qaravi. Keitou a tiko mai Navosa ena macawa sa oti, keitou muri iratou na Ministry of Youth and Sports ena nodratou Road Show. E lewe levu era laki saga kina na nodra volatara. Au via vakaraitaka talega vei ira ka ra laki biuta na nodra vola kerekere mai Navosa, ni gauna sa na caka oti kina na Passport, keitou na qai kauta cake ga yani kina Government Station, keitou na qai vakauta yani na kena i tukutuku, me na qai laki soli ga vei kemuni e kea.

[We also have a service where we bring them directly to you. We were in Navosa last week, accompanying the Ministry of Youth and Sports on their Road Show. Many people came to apply for their passports. I also want to let those who submitted their applications in Navosa know that once the passports have been completed, we will take them directly to the Government Station. We will then send the relevant information through, and the passports will be handed over to you there.]

We are also extending our services to Rotuma. We will be flying over on the Defence Pacific Air Programme rotation that is going over to Rotuma. We are joining other Government agencies to provide our services to Rotuma from 24th August to 13th September.

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, of course, the people in rural and maritime islands deserve better service, as mentioned by the honourable Minister. We look forward to whatever he has mentioned is able to be fulfilled in these four months because their Term is about to finish, otherwise, we have to come back and do it. My question to the honourable Minister is, what additional services are you going to provide online? We are talking about digitalFiji, and the 2025 and 2030 National Development Plan says you are going to be digital. What additional online services are you going to provide for the people in the rural area?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- You are not coming back.

(Laughter)

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- For the first time, all our applications for all the different types of permits, including citizenship, is now available online. For passports, we are now upgrading the system and when it is completed, it will mean that you can lodge your application online. Right now, you have to come to an Immigration Office, but you lodge it online, and then you will book an appointment to either come and do your biometrics or just come in to collect. That will be good even for our citizens who are overseas. They do not have to go to the nearest Embassy. They can just lodge those applications online. Yes, we are very much online now, and that upgrade will be good for passports also.

Preventative Measures Travellers in the Maritime Islands
(Question No. 189/2026)

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, before asking the question, I think it has been a great few months of us to be here with those who have been the survivors of the mishap in the Lau Waters, to be able to experience for ourselves God's grace in keeping them safe, and to meet them today – people who are a living testimony of the power of working together and being able to survive in perseverance. On my part, I think the Ministry of Health should consider nominating them for some special orders with His Excellency the President's Office.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, my question is:

Can the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services inform Parliament on what measures is the Ministry putting in place to prevent the re-occurrence of the mishap that almost saw the loss of lives of their staff who were travelling from Moce Island to Oneata Island in Lau, at the end of July this year?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr Speaker, Sir, I echo the same sentiments raised by honourable Usamate, in relation to the question being asked, to prevent a reoccurrence. Mr. Speaker, Sir, you, most of all, would understand that in travelling out at sea, there is always a risk. You can plan for a trip in an ideal weather with all the necessary life-saving apparatus or equipment on board and a good boat, nevertheless, there is always a risk that something is going to happen out there at sea. The incident that our staff faced travelling from Moce to Oneata has taught us many lessons and a few I wish to share with honourable Members today.

The Ministry takes the safety and wellbeing of our health workers very seriously, particularly, those serving in the maritime islands. The recent incident involving staff travelling from Moce to Oneata has reinforced the need to strengthen safety measures for maritime operations while also reducing the need for unnecessary travel through stronger local health services. To prevent recurrence, the Ministry is implementing several measures.

Firstly, we are bringing healthcare closer to our maritime communities with the recent posting of 12 additional Medical Officers in the Eastern Division. Moce Nursing Station has, for the first time, been allocated a Medical Officer. Prior to that, it was a nursing station, which is something that will be elevated as a health centre in the not-too-distant future. Nevertheless, a Medical Officer is being posted there. This will reduce the need for patients and health workers to undertake unnecessary travels to Lakeba for health services.

Secondly, we are seeking more structured arrangements to prioritise the Government vessel *MV Veivueti* for planned medical outreaches. *MV Veivueti* is already used for major multidisciplinary outreaches and has the capacity to safely transport large outreach teams. The Ministry will also explore additional funding to support its operations and readiness so that it is available when required for health services.

Thirdly, for smaller outreaches, where larger vessels cannot access remote channel communities, we will reinforce the two-vessel approach if an extra vessel is available to allow vessels to travel together and provide assistance to one another in the event of mechanical failure or other emergencies.

Fourthly, the Ministry will strengthen maritime safety through standard pre-departure checks, including:

- (a) verification of vessel seaworthiness;
- (b) weather assessment;
- (c) qualified skipper and crew;
- (d) sufficient fuel reserves;
- (e) life jackets for all passengers;
- (f) communication equipment;
- (g) emergency supplies; and
- (h) GPS tracking where it is feasible.

Additionally, we are strengthening authorisation coordination and overdue vessel response procedures. All outreach activities must follow established approval pathways, have

documented departures and arrival times, and be subject to clear escalation arrangements if a vessel becomes overdue.

Mr. Speaker, another issue identified through this incident is the challenge of maintaining outreach activities during the fourth quarter of the financial year, and outreach funding is traditionally worn down, however, community health needs to continue throughout the year. The Ministry will therefore examine greater financial flexibility so that appropriately planned and authorised essential outreaches can continue during the fourth quarter where there is a demonstrated need and the resources permit. This will help ensure that frontline teams are not placed in situations where critical community needs arise and normal outreach funding has already ceased.

Finally, we are strengthening standard operating procedures for emergency patient transfers and clarifying subdivisional command responsibilities to ensure effective oversight of outreach activities in maritime emergencies.

Mr. Speaker, our objective is clear, to make maritime outreach safer, better coordinated and better funded, while progressively bringing healthcare closer to our maritime communities so that both patients and health staff are exposed to less unnecessary sea travel.

As someone who has served in the maritime area of the Western Division, I can say with certainty that things have improved in terms of maritime travel for our staff. As I mentioned at the outset, there is always the risk, however, it is how you minimise the risk if something happens and how you adapt to your survival.

As I have mentioned, these are survivors, and I welcome your suggestion on recognition from Government in that sense and that is something we will look into. However, in moving forward, and as I have told our staff, “You have a story to tell, but when you are ready then you can share your story and how you survive.” It is probably something we can share with our staff and those civil servants who are out there in the maritime areas - the art of survival at sea. Nevertheless, we are thankful to God that survived and that they are well. They are still in the recovery phase in terms of the care provided to them by the Ministry.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I was going to have a follow-up question on the kinds of boats, but I think he has addressed that. Some of the issues were proposed by the Turaga Na Tui Nayau. One of the things that came to my mind, as I looked at this exercise, was the captain of the boat. The captain of the boat is from the *Yavusa Delai Korolevu*, the traditional *Gonedau* in Lakeba.

If you look at what happened there, some of the indigenous knowledge came to bear in terms of how things happened. I am just thinking now, as you look at it, how do you capture that because sometimes when you look for someone to be a captain of a boat, you have the Boat Master’s Licence, et cetera, but it is that aspect of indigenous knowledge from traditional lines that comes through. How is that going to be captured, perhaps, whether the Ministry of Health make sure you have the right kind of people captaining the boats?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, yes, I fully agree. We have to use the local people who are there and who know the environment in which they travel daily. For instance, when I was serving in Yasawa, my caretaker was also a boat captain. When the team from the Standing Committee on Social Affairs visited Nacula for the Public Health (Amendment) Bill, he was still alive and talking with them.

My captain back then, Mr. Jolame, was a well-known captain. In terms of how he operated the vessel, he was one of those individuals who travelled by sea and did not want anything to be in

front of him. The boat I had back then was a better boat and it had all the glasses in front. My caretaker and captain did not want the glasses to be in front, so whenever he operated the boat, he would always be looking outside. When the water comes in and splashes his face. For us, there is a reason why there is a glass in front to protect him, but that was his way. I am glad that during the two years I was in Yasawa, he kept me safe. Probably, if you looked outside, that was his own personal way of travel.

In terms of traditional knowledge, yes, that is a must. We are thankful that Rusi, the captain, in his traditional role, told them, “You stay together, I will swim and go look for help.” Because he was found, they managed to reduce the size of the area where they searched. We are thankful to Rusi for his traditional knowledge and how he survived. In picking people to be captains of boats, first they have to go through the normal processes of being a boat captain. I think it is Class 6, et cetera. Definitely, it is a requirement under the law that they have to be registered and pass the Class 6 and Boat master requirements. In that sense, if knowing the environment and having a traditional background in it carries even more weight for the person becoming the preferred choice.

MR. SPEAKER.- Let me just add a bit, because my father used to sail canoes in those treacherous stretches of water. It is quite fascinating to follow him around. Early in the morning, he would go down. If they were going to sail from Kabara to either Komo or Namuka or Moce, he would go down to the seashore early in the morning, and he would look at the horizon. If I followed him, it would be as if he was smelling the air and he would say, “No, we will not go today, because later on in the afternoon, the wind is going to shift to this way, and it is going to pick up.” He has never been proven wrong in any of those mornings.

So, this traditional knowledge that our people used to have is very difficult to capture now. I do not know how we can do it. It is passed through hard lessons, because many of our people died on those waters and would never have the opportunity, like the medical staff who are here. It is quite an interesting issue, honourable Members. I think I have diverged a bit, so we will come back to the question. You were going to ask a supplementary question?

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Yes, a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and I thank the honourable Minister for his answer to that question. My question is, I understand the expertise is already on the islands - a Class 6 can drive a vessel of about 50 tonnes. Is there any possibility, or are there any further plans to build vessels that are able to counter the rough waters? You never really know the weather conditions as it changes. Is there any plan to build? You used to have the vessel, especially for the Lau Group. Is there any possibility? The expertise is there. When it comes to Class 6, it is basically an engineer and a captain.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank honourable Koroilavesau for the supplementary question. Yes, incidents such as this have taught us a lesson. In terms of boat capacity and boat capabilities that we need to improve on, as such when this happened, we talked with our relevant team within the Ministry and we have decided that, “Yes, we need a new specification of boat that can travel in these seas. So, that is something we have considered. Currently, we have talked with a few of the suppliers, and they have sent us specs on a number of the types of vessels that they think will be conducive to that environment in terms of the maritime areas.

MR. SPEAKER.- Before we proceed to our last question, knowing the lateness of the hour and the day today, we will entertain a Suspension Motion for the purpose of complying with the Standing Orders with respect to our Sitting time.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I move under Standing Order 5:

That so much of Standing Order 23(1) is suspended so as to allow the House to sit beyond 12.30 p.m. today to complete the remaining items listed on today's Order Paper.

HON. S. TUBUNA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, we still have one more Oral Question, four Written Questions, and three End of Week Statements, and we also have Bills that will be tabled for first reading this afternoon.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion, if any. I do not see any.

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have no further comments.

MR. SPEAKER. - The Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

QUESTIONS

Oral Questions

Revised Community Levy Agreement – Naboro Landfill (Question No. 190/2026)

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Information, and Environment and Climate Change update Parliament on the Revised Community Levy Agreement for Naboro Landfill?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I too wish to join you and my colleagues in commending the bravery and the strength and resilience of our six civil servants, as well as both captains. Mr. Speaker, Sir, my mother's mother is from Nasau in Moce, the Mataqali Jafau, and she did cross those waters too in those days. As a family, we joined together to pray for our civil servants and are just very grateful to the Lord for his mercies and protection, and for you being able to join us here today.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Naboro Landfill sits on State freehold land, purchased by the government in 1907. It does sit on the ancestral land of the Yavusa Bativudi, and the Government recognizes that this relationship must be respected, not only in words, but through tangible benefits to the community. The community levy agreement has been in place since 2014, so I wish to acknowledge the previous government for bringing in this community levy agreement.

Under the agreement, 78 cents per tonne of waste received at Naboro was set aside for the community. The levy is a goodwill and socio-economic benefit. It is not a lease payment, neither is it compensation for environmental damage. From 2014 to 2024, \$887,165.68 has been disbursed. In 2024, the Yavusa Bativudi requested a review of the levy, including an increase and a fairer distribution of the benefits. We consulted the community, the iTaukei Affairs Board, and relevant Government agencies, and undertook a cost-benefit analysis.

The community's proposed increase comes from what the community proposed, we met with them as well and also sought a balance in the amount that was fair to the landowners, the taxpayers, and, of course, sustainable for Naboro. I am pleased to inform Parliament that Cabinet approved the revised agreement in July of 2026, so the community levy has increased from 78 cents to 85 cents per tonne.

There will now be a flat 20 percent allocation across five areas, and this has been what it has been used for, Mr. Speaker, Sir. It has been used to support education, housing, village development, investments, funerals, and community obligations. The revised agreement will run for five years, that dated from July 2024 to June 2029, and following the execution of this deed of variation, the payments will be made. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is more than just a levy, it is recognition, it is partnership, and it is about ensuring that development delivers benefits to the people whose land makes that development possible. We have found a responsible middle ground, better benefits for the community, while protecting the long-term operation of Fiji's natural landfill.

HON. P.D. KUMAR- If the honourable Minister can tell us how this money is collected and distributed?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the agreement itself, there need to be two reports that are required under the agreement. Firstly, the Naboro Landfill Levy Disbursement Report and a comprehensive report as well to go with it before we can execute the deed of variation. Yes, it is collected by our Ministry and then it is disbursed to the community directly. Yes, well, of course, it is collected for those managing the Naboro Landfill, so for every tonnage that is delivered, the amount of it and then the levies on every tonnage.

(Hon. V. Nath interjects)

MR. SPEAKER.- You are not! You stand up and apologise. It is not your supplementary. I was asked, I did not really see honourable Usamate. You do not shout out?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is good to see the honourable Minister in green today when we are talking about the economy. I am just thinking Madam Minister, in terms of the output you talk about, the fund is supposed to be for building residences, houses, and I am just wondering if there is any monitoring of how well, and how many houses are built and so forth for which the money is supposed to be used?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Though I am wearing green, my heart is blue. I will be cheering for Lelean tomorrow. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the money that is given to the communities is disbursed at their own convenience, it is their own choice. However, given the review of it in the last 10 years, from 2014 to 2024, yes, it has been used for those purposes, including housing, education, village development and other investments.

Written Questions

Capital Projects undertaken by Municipal Councils (Question No. 191/2026)

HON. P.D. KUMAR asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government update Parliament on all capital projects undertaken by each Municipal Council during the last three financial years, including:

- (a) Project description and approved budget for each capital project;
- (b) Actual expenditure; and
- (c) Source of funding and project completion status?

¹ HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I table my response.

Housing Authority's Key Deliverables
(Question No. 192/2026)

HON. A.N. TUICOLO asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government update Parliament on the key deliverables achieved by the Housing Authority over the past financial year, and how these achievements have contributed to increasing access to affordable housing and home ownership opportunities for Fijians?

²HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I table my response.

Suspended Civil Servants—October 2025-2026
(Question No. 193/2026)

HON. J. USAMATE asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Prime Minister, and Minister for Civil Service, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics inform Parliament on the following, for the period October 2025 to 30 June 2026:

- (a) How many civil servants are currently under suspension; and
- (b) The total cost to Government in salaries and benefits paid to them during their suspension periods?

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Prime Minister will table his report at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

Students Found in Possession of Drugs
(Question No. 194/2026)

HON. H. CHAND asked Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Education inform Parliament on the number of students found in possession of drugs in primary and secondary school premises in the last three years?

³ HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I table my response.

¹ Editor's Note: Reply to Written Question No. 191/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure I.

² Reply to Written Question No. 192/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government, under Standing Order 45(3) is appended as Annexure II.

³ Reply to Written Question No. 194/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Education, under Standing Order 45(3) is appended as Annexure III.

END OF WEEK STATEMENTS

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, each Member may speak for up to 10 minutes with a 10-minute response by the Minister or Ministers or member designated on the subject matter of the Member's speech. No seconder is required, and there will be no other debates.

Preservation of Standard Hindi or Shoddy Hindi

HON. V. LAL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, honourable Members of Parliament, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen; I rise today to speak on an issue that goes beyond language. It concerns our identity, our history, our cultural heritage and the responsibility we carry towards future generations.

The issue I wish to raise is the preservation of standard Hindi or Shuddh Hindi in Fiji. The preservation of a language is ultimately the preservation of a way of seeing the world. When a language disappears, we lose more than words, stories, expressions, memories, traditions and connections between generations. Fiji is a melting pot of many cultures and languages. Diversity, indeed, is one of our greatest assets.

Through centuries of interaction, our communities have evolved languages and dialects of their own that capture the essence of our unique experience and culture. Among the Indo-Fijian community, the language of Fiji Hindi has come to symbolise identity and belonging. It is a language of daily dialogue, humour, family conversation and social life. However, at the same time, there is another language among the Indo-Fijians that has immense significance, the language of standard Hindi and the gradual erosion of its use in formal dialogue, broadcasts, education and cultural activities is a matter of great concern for us.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is not a case of a debate against the language of Fiji Hindi. On the contrary, standard Hindi and Fiji Hindi are not rival languages at all. Both have their own distinct roles and functions. The former is the creation of generations of Indo-Fijians in Fiji, and the latter, on the other hand, is the connection between us and the rich literary and cultural heritage of India. It is the language of generations of Indians who studied Hindu scriptures, literature, poetry, songs, religious sermons and formal communication. Standard Hindi connects us with our rich intellectual and cultural tradition of the Indian subcontinent. For most of the families in Fiji, it is the language of religion, culture and education of our children.

The question before us, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is simple yet significant. What can we do to ensure that standard Hindi remains a living language in Fiji rather than becoming merely a language of the past? One of the most important areas is education. Institutions of education have a critical role to play in terms of preserving languages. The students have to realise that studying standard Hindi will not result in forgetting Fiji Hindi. On the contrary, this is going to give them one more option. Thus, a young Fijian will be able to speak his or her native language at home, speak English in a professional environment and study standard Hindi to read literary works, religious contexts and use it for international purposes.

We should therefore strengthen the teaching of Hindi and ensure that students have access to appropriate textbooks, qualified teachers, digital learning resources and engaging classroom materials. Hindi should not be presented as simply another examination subject. It should be presented as a living language with relevance to contemporary Fiji.

Before I elaborate on the second idea, let me highlight some researchers and scholars insights into this subject, and I believe this is particularly useful for this argument. Kachru 2006, research on Language Variation and Development. Kachru's work demonstrates that languages and their varieties

develop through social, cultural, and historical contact. In simple words, when people from different language backgrounds live together, languages naturally change and develop. These differences should not be seen as a weakness. However, the existence of a local variety does not eliminate the value of a standard variety. Standard forms continue to provide access to formal education, literature, and wider cultural traditions.

There is also a direct connection between Braj Kachru and research on standard Hindi, Fiji Hindi. In research conducted in Fiji, Brijesh Chand and Suresh Chand report that standard Hindi is preferred in more formal educational, religious, and cultural contexts, whereas Fiji Hindi is widely used in informal communication and at home.

The second area requiring attention is broadcasting and the media. Mr. Speaker, Sir, radio and television have played an important role in the maintenance of Hindi in Fiji, but there is a need to further examine the quality and variety of standard Hindi employed in broadcasting. We need programmes where correct, clear and accessible standard Hindi is presented to listeners and viewers without disassociating them from the linguistic realities of Fiji. Our broadcasters can do a lot in this direction by producing educational programmes, interviews, documentaries, children's programmes, cultural discussions and literary segments in standard Hindi. At the same time, Fiji Hindi may still be used where appropriate and natural.

The third area is the digital environment. Our youth are increasingly communicating through social media, online videos, podcasts and other digital platforms. The lack of standard Hindi in these spaces will naturally mean fewer opportunities for young people to hear, read and use it. We need to encourage the production of quality Hindi digital content made in Fiji. This could include short educational videos, podcasts, storytelling shows, conversations with elders, discussions in Hindi and digital archives of traditional songs, stories and oral histories.

Honourable Members, language preservation cannot be done by the Government alone - families and communities have a vital role to play. Language starts at home. Parents and grandparents can motivate children to listen to Hindi songs, read Hindi books, participate in cultural and religious events and speak in Hindi. Temples, cultural organisations and community groups can also create spaces in which young people can use standard Hindi in a natural and competent manner.

We also need to acknowledge the role of our elders. Many of our elders have valuable language and cultural knowledge that will be lost if not recorded and passed on. Their stories, songs, sayings, memories and experiences are part of Fiji's cultural heritage. We have to give younger generations the chance to learn directly from them.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, universities and research institutions also have a significant role. There is a need for more systematic research on the changing linguistic landscape in Fiji. We have to document the use of standard Hindi in Fiji and Fiji Hindi across generations, communities and contexts. Such research can provide policymakers, educators and broadcasters with vital information for language planning and preservation.

We should also encourage the development of teaching materials that are contextualised to the Fijian environment. Students should be able to learn standard Hindi, but also see their own Fijian experiences reflected in the language. A language becomes meaningful when learners can use it to talk about their families, their communities, their environment, their history and their aspirations.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is another important point that we must make clear — language preservation must never become a source of division. On this note, I will share another linguistic

scholar's perspective in relation to this subject. Fiji Hindi is an important part of our national heritage and deserves respect and recognition.

At the same time, according to Siegel 1987, recognising Fiji Hindi should not result in the gradual displacement of standard Hindi. Standard Hindi deserves protection because it provides access to a broader body of literature, scholarship, religious texts and cultural traditions. Our policy should therefore be one of preservation and complementarity. The Fiji Hindi for its unique Fijian identity and heritage and standard Hindi for formal, educational and wider cultural purposes.

Honourable Members, I, therefore, suggest that we consider a national coordinated approach to strengthen standard *Hindi* in Fiji. This can be accomplished by better *Hindi* language education, continuous professional development of teachers, better teaching resources, stronger *Hindi* broadcasting, digital content creation, community language programmes, cultural events, research, and documentation.

We should also consider partnerships with universities, schools, cultural organisations, religious organisations, broadcasters, and relevant international organisations to support the long-term development of *Hindi* in Fiji. Above all, we must involve our young people. If the preservation of language is only a duty to the past, young people may not connect.

Hindi can be a language of education, technology, literature, media, business, diplomacy, and cultural exchange. In an increasingly connected world, multilingualism is an asset, not a disadvantage. Fiji has inherited a remarkable linguistic and cultural legacy. We have a responsibility to protect it. Let us therefore preserve and uphold standard *Hindi* as an important expression of Indo-Fijian identity and strengthen the variety as a language of education, literature, culture, religion, and formal communication. Let us create classrooms where Hindi is respected, media, where *Hindi* is heard, homes, where *Hindi* is spoken, communities, where *Hindi* is celebrated, and digital spaces, where Hindi has a future.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, generations before us preserved their languages under difficult circumstances. They carried their traditions across oceans and passed them to their children. Today, the responsibility rests with us. Let us not be the generation that allows the heritage to fade. Let us instead be the generation to strengthen it, document it, teach it, and pass it proudly to those who come after us. Language is heritage, language is identity, language is connection, and when we preserve our languages, we preserve a part of who we are. *Hindi* is not just a language of expression, it is our identity, a foundation of our existence and a matter of our self-respect.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, and I want to thank the honourable Minister for Education for asking me and allowing me to respond to the Statement made by honourable Virendra Lal, and I am happy to do so. The honourable Minister for Education and I sat in Opposition for eight years, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and it is quite interesting. I want to thank honourable Virendra Lal for bringing this subject, because during the FijiFirst reign, it would have been very, difficult for anyone on the other side to even talk about and use the word standard *Hindi*.

This is a very significant change and departure from the policy that the Opposition had for many years. This is an important theme for Fiji, Mr. Speaker, Sir, because language preservation is not simply about protecting words, it is about protecting history, it is about protecting identity, knowledge, and cultural continuity. So, protecting *Vosa Vakaviti*, *iTaukei* culture and heritage, and preserving standard *Hindi*, culture, tradition is complementary to building a modern multicultural Fiji.

Historically, Mr. Speaker, Sir, *Hindi* has been part of Fiji's national heritage. *Hindi* has been spoken in Fiji for generations, evolving from the experience of the Girmitiyas and their descendants. Fiji *Hindi* has also developed as a distinctive language of everyday life, while standard *Hindi* remains important for formal education, literature, religious and philosophical texts, journalism, cultural expression, and connections with the wider *Hindi*-speaking world.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the past and again, I want to say this, that this Government one of the first things that we did was to allow us as members of Parliament to speak in both *Vosa Vakaviti* and standard Hindi. I think that was a very, very significant message and turn of events that this Government created, because if we can speak the two important languages, our heritage in this Parliament, then that is a message we are sending to our young, to those in schools and those who may have lost interest in speaking in *Vosa Vakaviti* and in Hindi.

Mr. Speaker, Sir in the last 15 or 16 years, in fact, the national broadcaster, the Fiji Broadcasting Commission was forced to do away with standard Hindi, which was always historically the way in which FBC was broadcasting in *Vosa Vakaviti* and standard Hindi. There was a deliberate policy to remove the spoken standard Hindi, which was always taught in schools. Because if children do not know how to read, write, and understand the alphabets, eventually, Mr. Speaker, Sir, they will lose that language, and it has happened in countries such as Trinidad, where there was always a large Hindi-speaking population, but they were not allowed to teach Hindi in schools, and eventually, they lost the language.

The idea that Fiji Hindi and standard Hindi is in some kind of competition, that was deliberately created. I remember being ridiculed by the national broadcaster at that time for saying that we need to teach standard Hindi because it was seen as a competition. It should not. Fiji Hindi and standard Hindi should not be placed in competition. As I said, Fiji Hindi is authentic, valuable expression of Fiji's history and identity.

However, standard Hindi, Mr. Speaker, Sir, serves a different but complementary function. A child can speak Fiji Hindi confidently at home and in the community, while learning standard Hindi in school helps refine that language. Again, as a government, we have made sure that we support the teaching of Hindi and *Vosa Vakaviti* as formal teaching curriculum in schools.

I know when the Minister brought the Education Bill, Hindi and *Vosa Vakaviti* were recognised as two important languages that need to be taught as well. We also ensured that we provided funding and scholarships for students to do Hindi programmes. I must say that in the 2024-2025 budget, we had allocated about \$2.4 million capital grant for the University of Fiji to set up a Centre for iTaukei Studies and Centre for Hindi Studies.

I am happy to inform, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that both the Centre for iTaukei Studies building as well as the Centre for Hindi Studies are underway. There are already plans by University of Fiji to strengthen those curricula that might be used in schools and educational institutions. Schools, therefore, are very critical for us to preserve both *Vosa Vakaviti* and standard Hindi. So standard Hindi and *Vosa Vakaviti* need strong teaching from primary through secondary education, supported by trained teachers, contemporary textbooks, and attractive digital resources.

Hindi should not be presented to young people merely as another examination subject, and likewise, *Vosa Vakaviti*. Students should encounter these two languages through stories, poetry, music, theatre, debate, film and digital media. Technology is an important factor in preserving languages. Sometimes we think that technology is a threat. In fact, technology can be an important ally on these platforms where younger generations communicate using these platforms. Therefore, we should encourage digital Hindi content, digital *Vosa Vakaviti* content, podcasts, children's programmes, online dictionaries, oral history archives and educational applications.

Artificial Intelligence is quite an interesting technological development because it does create opportunities for translation. It is very easy now, you go to ChatGPT, you say, translate this paragraph or a written piece into Hindi or *Vosa Vakaviti*, it does that. It helps to preserve language in that way as well. All I want to do today, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is to thank all the radio and television stations for bringing in both *Vosa Vakaviti* and standard Hindi programmes, and the announcement of news and other programmes. FBC has also started a Hindi television news service like the *Vosa Vakaviti* language news service, and all these helps in the preservation of our language.

Last message, when a language disappears, and communities around the world have lost language, we lose more than a means of communication. We lose memories, stories, humour, songs, philosophies, and a particular way of understanding the world. As I have said in the beginning, this is a very important theme and subject.

I want to thank the honourable Virendra Lal for bringing this up. However, my message is, this Government has already started that, and we have, in the last three years, reversed all the attacks on the standard Hindi that was very clearly undertaken by the former government. I am glad that we have moved away from that. I think we have a bipartisan understanding now that these two languages, the teaching of standard Hindi and *Vosa Vakaviti* is important and critical for the preservation of our culture, tradition, and heritage.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will now suspend our proceedings for lunch. Parliament will resume at 2.30 p.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.53 p.m.

The Parliament resumed 2.40 pm.

National Population Policy 2026-2035

HON. J.R. VOCEA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to deliver the end-of-week statement on the National Population Policy 2026 to 2035. The statement will highlight the Government's first comprehensive framework to address major population trends that will shape the nation's future including:

- population decline;
- ageing population;
- migration;
- labour shortages; and
- emerging health challenges.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I rise today to inform this honourable House of Government's endorsement of Fiji's first-ever National Population Policy 2026-2035, approved by Cabinet on 15th July, 2026. This is a landmark national policy because Fiji is entering a period of significant demographic change. We are facing population decline, an ageing population, outward migration, labour shortages, changing family structures, health pressures, urbanisation, an increasing climate-related mobility. These are not simply population statistics they are economic, social, and national resilience issues that will influence Fiji's development for generations to come.

On the population trend, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji's population is projected to decline from 884,887 recorded in the 2017 census to approximately 863,737 by 2035, a reduction of about 2.2 percent. At the same time, the number of Fijians aged 65 years and above is projected more than double from approximately 49,000 in 2017 to around 100,000 by 2035. Fertility is also declining. Fiji's total fertility rate is approximately 2.7 children per woman, while among Indo-Fijians it stands at approximately 1.7, below the replacement level of 2.1.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, fewer children today ultimately means a smaller workforce tomorrow. This is compounded by migration, labour mobility, and overseas employment, which have created important opportunities for Fijians, and remittances continue to support families and our economy. However, the departure of nurses, teachers, engineers, tradespeople, and other skilled workers is creating shortages across critical sectors.

For rural and maritime Fiji, the effects are even more significant. When young people leave our communities, we do not only lose population, but we also lose farmers, fishermen, entrepreneurs, community leaders, and the productive capacity needed to sustain rural economies. That is why our Coalition Government believes population policy must be linked directly with economic development and rural transformation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, our health situation also requires urgent attention. NCDs, including diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancer, account for approximately 80 percent of deaths in Fiji. The Government's declaration of an HIV outbreak in January 2025 reinforces the need for stronger prevention, awareness, treatment, and community-level health interventions.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a country cannot build a productive economy without a healthy population. Likewise, we cannot speak about national development while ignoring social challenges. Fiji continues to experience unacceptably high levels of violence against women and girls. Protecting women, strengthening our families, and supporting our vulnerable citizens must therefore remain central to our national development agenda.

In linking population policy to development, Mr. Speaker, Sir, urbanisation is also changing Fiji. Approximately 56 percent of our population now lives in urban areas, increasing pressure on housing, infrastructure, and public services, while many rural communities experience population decline. Government therefore recognises that we cannot simply manage rural-to-urban migration. We must address the reasons people feel compelled to leave rural communities in the first place. This is where the National Population Policy connects directly with the draft National Rural Development Policy (NRDP), which is currently under validation stages.

The National Population Policy helps us understand why our people are moving. The draft NRDP will provide the development response to create conditions that allow people to remain invested and prosper in rural and maritime Fiji. Mr. Speaker, Sir, our goal must be to make rural and maritime communities, places where our people can live with dignity, generate income, build wealth, and raise their families. This approach is fully aligned with the National Development Plan 2025-2029 and Vision 2050. The National Development Plan provides the overall direction through economic resilience, people empowerment, and good governance. That is the integrated development approach the Coalition Government is pursuing.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, climate change adds another critical dimension. The Government has identified 676 communities vulnerable to climate-related impacts, with 40 villages identified for potential relocation. This means population planning and disaster risk planning can no longer be treated separately. Goal No. 6 of the Population Policy, therefore, focuses on climate-induced population mobility and community resilience. This aligns closely with the National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy, which promotes mainstreaming disaster risk into development planning and shifting our national approach from reacting to disasters towards preventing and reducing risk.

Accurate population information will help govern better plan, evacuation centres, Early Warning Systems, resilient infrastructure relocation, housing, social protection, and emergency services.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, during a disaster, Government needs to know where our elderly are located, where persons with disabilities live, which households require additional assistance, and which maritime or isolated communities are most at risk. Resilience begins with knowing our people and understanding our communities before disaster strikes. A child in rural Fiji deserves access to quality education. A farmer deserves access to markets and technology. A mother deserves accessible health care. A young person deserves employment and business opportunities. An elderly citizen deserves security and dignity regardless of where they live. That is the political and development principle behind this policy. No community and no Fijian should be left behind.

The goals of the National Population Policy, there are eight goals:

- (1) Demographic transition;
- (2) Health and wellbeing;
- (3) Wealth and employment creation;
- (4) Migration and urbanisation;
- (5) Family empowerment;
- (6) Climate and environmental resilience;
- (7) Stronger population data; and
- (8) Governance and partnership coordination.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Policy was also shaped by extensive national consultations, reaching 187 of Fiji's 195 districts, including Rotuma, and involving provincial councils, district advisory councils, civil society, faith-based organisations, women, youth, older persons, and persons with

disabilities. This is important because good policy cannot simply be designed in Suva and imposed on communities. It must reflect the realities, aspirations and challenges of our people.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the population trends will not change overnight, but the decisions we make today will determine what Fiji looks like in 2035 and beyond. But if we act early, invest in our people, strengthen our rural economies and build resilient communities, we can turn demographic change into opportunity.

This Government chooses to plan ahead, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the question before us is not simply how many people Fiji will have in 2035. The greater question is what kind of Fiji will they inherit? And our responsibility is to ensure they inherit a Fiji that is prosperous, inclusive, healthy, resilient and full of opportunity.

MR. SPEAKER.- I now invite the Minister of Finance for his response.

HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to respond and also support and amplify honourable Vocea's End-of-the-Week Statement on National Population Policy, which is a timely policy, and I am told that this is the first. I am not sure whether one was done in the last 16 years or 20 years. With that, I wish to acknowledge the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Civil Service and Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics for his foresight in bringing this policy.

It comes at a critical juncture as the country's population dynamics undergo a substantial shift that will face far-reaching implications for national development in years to come. We are going through the process felt by the other countries years ago, such as Japan and China. The key population challenges we are facing, as mentioned by the honourable Minister, includes population decline, unprecedented migration, declining fertility, ageing population, labour shortages, health challenges and the higher rates of violence against women, children and girls.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the process in developing this Policy, it was endorsed in 2024 in Cabinet, and then Cabinet further endorsed the establishment of National Population Steering Committee, which is chaired by the Chief Executive Officer of Fiji Bureau of Statistics. So, while wide consultations are carried out, as mentioned by the honourable Assistant Minister, both at national level and divisional level.

The key features again with a vision that by 2035 Fiji will achieve sustainable population dynamics that enhance economic prosperity, social cohesion and environmental resilience while ensuring all individuals enjoy equal opportunities with dignity across generations. This policy was anchored on seven core principles, some of which were highlighted by the honourable Vocea, that is, value of human life, family as the foundation of our society are two key ones apart from respect for human rights, gender equality and empowerment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the policy addresses the challenges with the eight interconnected goals: managing the demographic transitions, the health and well-being of our people, the wealth and employment creation in our economy, migration and urbanisation to empower families and also cater for the environment and the climate change we are facing. Plus also, the changing data systems and governance we are facing, as well as the improvement or the need to improve on partnerships and coordination at every level of Government.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the National Population Policy is strategically aligned to our national development priorities, including the Vision 2050, the National Development Plan 2025 to 2029. It aligns with international commitment as well, apart from alignment with our sectoral policies locally.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this National Population Policy is timely, as I mentioned before, to further improve our national development and also meet our population challenges ahead.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, please note the next End of the Week Statement, has been withdrawn. Therefore, I will now call on the honourable Ratu Josaia Niudamu to deliver his End of the Week Statement.

Implementation of the Criminal Records Act 2026

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Prime Minister, honourable Deputy Prime Ministers, honourable Cabinet Ministers, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, and fellow Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen. I warmly greet you all this afternoon, *ni sa yadra vinaka*.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise today to update this august House on the important preparation currently underway by the Ministry of Justice in collaboration with key Government agencies and stakeholders to support the Implementation of the Criminal Records Act 2026.

At the outset, I wish to acknowledge the support shown by both sides of this august House during the passage of this legislation in May. The bipartisan support demonstrated a shared recognition that our justice system must not only hold people accountable for their action, but must also recognise genuine rehabilitation, forgiveness, and the possibility of a second chance.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Criminal Records Act 2026 introduces a new framework for dealing with criminal records through three distinct mechanisms, spent convictions, expunged historical convictions, and expedited fixed-penalty offences.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the significance of this Act extends beyond legal and administrative reform. For many ordinary Fijians, Mr. Speaker, Sir, a criminal conviction has remained a burden, long after they have completed their sentence, paid their penalty, and rebuilt their lives. A mistake made years or even decades ago would continue to affect employment opportunities, travel, migration prospects, and social acceptance.

A question, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we must ask ourselves is this, how long should a person continue to be punished after he or she has served the punishment imposed by the law? If an individual has served his or her sentence, remained a law-abiding citizen, demonstrated good character and made a genuine effort to rebuild his or her life, then Government and society must also be prepared to recognise that rehabilitation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as the renowned American author, Maya Angelou, once said, and I quote:

“We delight in the beauty of the butterfly but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty”

Rehabilitation is about recognising those changes. It is about accepting that people can learn from their mistakes. It is about understanding that a person should not necessarily be defined for the rest of his or her life by a single mistake, particularly where that person has demonstrated a genuine rehabilitation and a commitment to becoming a productive member of society.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Criminal Records Act provides eligible individuals with an opportunity to move forward. Depending on the circumstances and the requirements of the law, certain convictions may become spent, while qualifying historical convictions may be expunged. This can

have a significant impact on the lives of ordinary Fijians who have spent years carrying the consequences of old convictions. For someone who has worked hard to rebuild his or her life, this may mean a renewed opportunity to seek employment, pursue education, or explore opportunities that may previously have been closed because of an old criminal record.

However, it is equally important to be clear that this is not a blanket eraser of criminal records. The Act maintains important safeguards. Serious convictions resulting in a custodial sentence of more than 30 months, as well as sexual offences and serious violence offences, are excluded from the spent conviction provisions. There are also circumstances in which criminal record information may continue to be disclosed where necessary, including for law enforcement purposes, court proceedings, national security functions, and assessments relating to work with children or persons with disabilities.

It is also important that the public clearly understand the application of the Criminal Records Act 2026 in relation to overseas travel, migration, and employment opportunities. Even when a conviction is spent under Fiji's law, an individual may still be required to declare that conviction when applying for a visa or other immigration opportunity. Every country has its own immigration laws and determines the information that visa applicants must provide.

Fiji's laws cannot change or override the laws of another country. However, the Ministry has received assurance from the Australian and New Zealand immigration authorities that the existence of a criminal record does not automatically result in the rejection of a visa application. Applications are considered on a case-by-case basis and are determined in accordance with the respective immigration laws and requirements of those countries.

This is an important message for Fijians seeking opportunities overseas. While the Criminal Records Act 2026 may provide eligible individuals with a pathway to have certain convictions treated as spent or in qualifying circumstances, expunged, individuals must continue to comply fully with the disclosure requirements of the country to which they are applying. The Ministry will ensure that this information is clearly communicated as part of its public awareness programmes so that applicants can make informed decisions and have realistic expectations when pursuing overseas opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Act strikes an important balance. It recognises the need to protect the public and preserve access to criminal records information where there is a legitimate legal or public interest in doing so. At the same time, it recognises that where a person has genuinely rehabilitated himself or herself, that person should not necessarily remain permanently kept by the consequences of the conviction. The work now underway is focused on ensuring that the implementation of the Act is responsible, coordinated and clearly understood by the public.

The Ministry of Justice has established an Inter-Agency Taskforce comprising key Government agencies and stakeholders, including the:

- Fiji Police Force;
- Fiji Correction Services;
- Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions;
- Ministry of Employment, Productive and Workplace Relations;
- Office of the Solicitor-General; and
- Representatives of the Australian and New Zealand High Commissions.

This Taskforce has been meeting almost weekly following the passage of the Act to deliberate on and progress the development of the criminal records regulations and the broader implementation

arrangements.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the proposed Criminal Records Regulations 2026 will provide important administrative and operational support for the implementation of the Act. They establish rules governing access to and use of criminal record information, safeguards for public records and expunge convictions and arrangements to support the consistent, lawful preparation and issuing of police clearance certificates. The Ministry is also preparing communication materials and operating procedures to ensure that the public, relevant institutions and implementing agencies clearly understand how the new framework will operate.

This public awareness work will be particularly important in managing expectations. Not every conviction will qualify under the Act, and the application of the law will depend on the nature of the conviction and the specific requirements set out in the legislation. The public must therefore receive clear and accurate information about eligibility, the relevant processes and the circumstances in which criminal record information may still be required or disclosed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the ministry is also working closely with relevant agencies to address practical implementation challenges, including the updating and digitisation of conviction records held within the justice system and the Fiji Police Force. The implementation of this Act represents more than the introduction of new administrative processes. It represents a broader principle of justice.

A justice system must hold people accountable when they break the law, but justice must also recognise when that accountability has been met, when a person has served his or her time and when that person has demonstrated a genuine commitment to rehabilitation. Forgiveness does not mean ignoring wrongdoing, nor does a second chance mean compromising public safety. Rather, it means recognising that people are capable of change.

For the ordinary Fijians who made a poor decision many years ago, served the punishment imposed by the courts, raised a family, worked hard and remained a responsible law-abiding citizen, this Act represents the possibility that the past does not always help to determine the future.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is an opportunity for Government, communities, families and society as a whole to say we recognise your rehabilitation, we acknowledge your efforts and we believe that you deserve the opportunity to move forward. The Ministry of Justice, together with its partner agencies and stakeholders, remains steadfast in ensuring that the implementation of the Criminal Records Act 2026 is undertaken carefully, lawfully and effectively.

Our objective is clear, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to protect the integrity of our justice system while ensuring that those who have genuinely rehabilitated themselves are given a fair opportunity to rebuild their lives and contribute positively to our nation.

The Criminal Records Act 2026 gives Fiji an opportunity to do exactly that. Our team is now finalising the regulations, rules and forms for the operationalisation of the Criminal Records Act 2026. Our timeline for the commencement date of 1st September, 2026.

Turaga saka na Speaker, vei na noda era vakarogorogo saka tiko mai e na yakavi daidai, e sa tekivu sara tiko na kena vakalawa taka na Criminal Records Act vei ira na kerekere tiko me bokoca laivi na nodra cala sa oti rawa na vei yabaki sa oti. E namaki tiko na Minisitri ni Lawa kei na Lawa Dodonu me sa tekivu ena 1st September 2026.

[Mr. Speaker, to all those listening in this afternoon, we have preparations for the Criminal Records Act and for those that requested to expunge their cases, the Ministry of Justice has earmarked for this commence on 1st September 2026.]

I also wish to thank our Consultant, Ms. Natalie Palmstead; the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Justice, Ms. Selina Kuruleca; and all the staff from the Ministry of Justice.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the statement delivered by the Assistant Minister for Justice. I acknowledge the significant work being undertaken by the Ministry of Justice and its partner agencies in preparation for the implementation of the Criminal Records Act 2006.

At the outset, I commend the stakeholders involved in developing the important reforms. Criminal Records Act 2006 represents a progressive and balanced step towards Fiji's justice system. It reflects an understanding that while accountability for wrongdoing is essential, rehabilitation and reintegration are equally important principles of fair and humane society.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of the greatest strengths of this Bill is that it recognises a simple but powerful truth. People are capable of change. Many individuals who have committed offences in the past have gone on to become responsible parents, hardworking employees, business owners, community leaders, and productive citizens. This is a proud moment for the Ministry of Justice, the Permanent Secretary, all the staff, and also for the stakeholder partners.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the dedication and diligence of this multi-agency. Without them, we would not have moved. This morning, we were talking about the Adoption Act, the Child Justice Act, and another related, enacted a few years ago, for some reason or another, they were never put into operation because there was no strong direction there was no willpower put into it.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I say this, "I try my best to attend the meeting of the taskforce and to see them with their knowledge of the system." On the same note, it is a bit unfortunate for honourable Usamate to criticise the civil servants that they are slack. They do work hard, Mr. Speaker, Sir. All the honourable Ministers here can attest to that. This morning we listened to the civil servants from Lau.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Point of Order on clarification.

MR. SPEAKER.- Clarification, yes, honourable Usamate.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I did not say that all civil servants are not working hard. I said the point is that the process that they are in, no matter how good you are, means that the work is not delivered. You can have an excellent civil servant, if the process is not good, then you will not deliver the results. So, you need to talk about things in the context. The Adoption Act was not implemented because of COVID-19. The other ones, the childcare and the justice

MR. SPEAKER.- You may proceed, honourable Minister.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- I am grateful that honourable Usamate admitted to that. However, we have listened this morning to the stories of civil servants in Lau. The hardship that they have gone through, and that is typically any civil servant's phase wherever they are, whether in rural, maritime and urban areas. I am talking about civil servants in urban areas here, from different agencies, turning up at meetings to make sure it happens and it is going to happen under this Coalition Government.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is equally important to recognise that the Act has been carefully designed to maintain public confidence and safeguard public safety. As my *turaga mataqali* has clearly articulated, serious offences, with certain violent sexual offence remain excluded from the spent conviction provisions.

The legislation also preserves the ability of law enforcement agencies, courts, and other authorised bodies to access criminal record information when necessary in public cases. There was a question raised to the honourable Minister for Policing about police clearance and this is problematic.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I can attest to this House, almost every single day, I receive notes from members of the public asking when the Act will operationalise. It is a good feeling to stand in this House, and this Government has committed to do so, and will continue to do so, to pass laws that is going to change the lives of ordinary Fijians.

I welcome the establishment of the interagency taskforce, and the work of all the agencies, and I thank them entirely. The coordination efforts will be essential in ensuring the implementation is orderly, transparent, and effective, particularly support the emphasis being placed on public awareness and education. Clear communication will help manage expectations, and ensure that individuals make informed decisions based on accurate information.

As we move forward, the intended commencement date is the first quarter of this financial year, and I convey to all those who work diligently behind the scenes to bring this important reform into operation for their commitment to implement the Criminal Records Act 2026 in a manner that is fair, responsible, consistent with the values of justice, accountability and rehabilitation.

MR. SPEAKER.- I take note of the saying, “fly in the ointment”. There are certain honourable Members who invariably attract comments and interjections whenever they take the floor, so I am just making a point.

BILLS – FIRST READING

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, there will be five Bills for consideration today. The first two will be for First Reading only and the remaining three will be moved under Standing Order 51.

Fiji National University Bill 2026

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 84, I move:

That the Fiji National University Bill 2026 (Bill No. 27/2026) be now read a first time.

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

(Four copies of the Bill handed to Secretary-General)

[A Bill for an Act to provide for the governance and administration of the Fiji National University and for related matters (Bill No. 27, 2026)]

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, in accordance with Standing Order 84(1), the Bill has now been read a first time. The Bill will now be listed on the Order Paper and set down for Second Reading at a future sitting of Parliament. Honourable Members, you are given the second reading of the Bill will be scheduled at a future sitting, I encourage you Members to study and

examine the Bill and prepare accordingly, noting that Second Reading will primarily focus on the principles and merits of the Bill.

Yaqona (Kava) Bill 2026

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 84, I move:

That the Yaqona (Kava) Bill 2026 (Bill No. 28/2026) be read for the first time.

HON. A.B.V.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, I second the motion.

(Four copies of the Bill handed to Secretary-General)

[A Bill for an Act to establish the Fiji Yaqona Council for the purpose of the regulation and management of the Yaqona Industry in Fiji and for related matters (Bill No. 28 of 2026)]

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, in accordance with Standing Order 84(1), the Bill has now been read for the first time. The Bill will now be listed on the Order Paper and set down for Second Reading at a future sitting of Parliament. Similar to the earlier Bill, I encourage honourable Members to prepare accordingly for the next stage.

ELECTORAL (AMENDMENT) BILL 2026

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

That the –

- (a) Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2026 be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) Bill must be immediately referred to the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights;
- (d) the Standing Committee must report on the Bill at the next sitting of Parliament; and
- (e) Upon presentation of the Report on the Bill by the Standing Committee, the Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament, with the right of reply given to me as the Member moving this motion.

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, I second the motion.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to move that the Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2026 be now considered by Parliament. The Bill seeks to modernize and strengthen Fiji's electoral framework by amending the Electoral Act 2014. The proposed amendments are designed to facilitate broader participation in the electoral process, improve the administration of elections, clarify by clearly defining electoral offences through a new classification system of corrupt and illegal electoral practices.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill also responds to issues identified through recent electoral law consultation. It further updates campaign, postal voting and pre-poll voting provisions to better reflect realities and support the efficient conduct of elections. These amendments will contribute to more accessible, transparent, accountable electoral system that strengthens public confidence in Fiji's democratic institutions.

With those remarks, I commend the Bill to Parliament.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion. At the end of the debate, I will give the honourable Minister for Justice and Acting Attorney-General his right of reply.

If there is no intervention from the floor, I will now call on the honourable Minister for Justice and Acting Attorney-General to speak in reply.

HON. S. D. TURAGA.- I fully support the Bill for further consideration of the Committee, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

[Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2026 moved under Standing Order 51 and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights]

POLITICAL PARTIES (REGISTRATION, CONDUCT, FUNDING AND DISCLOSURES) (AMENDMENT) BILL 2026

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

That the –

- (a) Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) (Amendment) Bill 2026 be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) Bill must be immediately referred to the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights;
- (d) the Standing Committee must report on the Bill at the next sitting of Parliament; and
- (e) upon presentation of the Report on the Bill by the Standing Committee, the Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament, with the right of reply given to me as the Member moving this motion.

HON. A.V. B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, I second the motion.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to move that the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) (Amendment) Bill 2026 be now considered by Parliament. The Bill seeks to amend the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013 to incorporate recommendations arising from the Multinational Observer Group Reports, the Fiji Law Reform Commission Report or Fatiaki Report, EMB Consultants and to align the Act with the reforms proposed in the Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2026.

The Bill introduces campaign expenditure limits for political parties and candidates, enhances donations, discloses requirements and updates the treatment of electoral offences by categorising them as either corrupt electoral practises or illegal electoral practises.

The Bill also seeks to create a more level playing field for all political parties, while ensuring that the public continues to have access to important information regarding political donation and campaign financing. These reforms are consistent with international best practice and support public confidence in Fiji's democratic institutions.

With those brief remarks, I commend the Bill to Parliament.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion. At the end of the debate, I will call upon the mover for his right of reply.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for bringing this particular Bill to the House in terms of the registration of parties and electoral registration of voters. There are a lot of things that we have in our current legislation, which is good, in terms of trying to make sure that we are not dominated by large companies that donate a lot of money, I think we have good caps in that.

This particular Bill, their number of amendments is not too high. I think this particular Bill, to come back in September is possible. When you take this Bill and the other Bill that we have just gone through, the one that was presented earlier, which is the amendment to the Electoral Act, which has around 47 amendments, I think that the other one (I am sorry that I did not speak up when this particular Bill came up), there are 47 amendments in this. This one, the one that has just been delivered, yes, it is possible - by September, given the workload of the Committees. This other one, and I speak very frankly because it needs to be looked at very carefully, it will be very difficult to deliver that one within a month.

My point, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and I am speaking as a Member of the Committee, the second one, yes. The other one, I must say, and I apologise that I did not speak up, it will be very difficult to address this within that particular timeframe.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is a reason why it was brought under Standing Order 51, because of the urgency. It is election year. Most of the issues that honourable Usamate referred to, they basically are common. The other party, this party, the three parties, they agreed that there should be a change in which elections are conducted. No more stronger, stringent, unnecessary measures, more festive, more open. We have to trust the system; that is the whole idea. I am sorry that your legacy is coming to an end. We want people to enjoy the election, and that is why we have given the Committee a month or so to deliberate, for some of the political parties, and I am sure you will come to an agreement. We have moved, we have significantly changed from where we took off in early 2020.

Mr. Speaker reminded us yesterday, despite all the politicking, polarisation talk here, outside there, it is normal, *totoka, cecere, vinaka*. Let us keep that spirit. Honourable Vocea, a new Fiji, and that is to do with the honourable Prime Minister's speech, to create a new Fiji.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- *Vinaka*.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Hogwash!

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Tomorrow is the weekend. *Vakanuinui vinaka ena qito vei rau na timi e rua, ka vaka kina vei kemuni yadudua. Vei kemuni Turaga na Sipika, vinaka vakalevu na nomuni veivakatudeitaki, vei kemuni na lewenivanua o ni vakarorogo tiko mai, ratou keke tiko mai na matasere mai Gau, e ratou tiko 'qo i Draiba. Au vakabula tiko vei kemuni na matasere mai Gau, 'qo sa qai dina sara ga.*

[All the best to both teams in the game, and to each and every one of you. To you, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for your leadership. And to you, the members of the public who are listening in, the band from Gau is here in Draiba. I extend my greetings to them - this

is truly something special.]

There was something, Mr. Speaker, Sir, if I may just add, shared by one of those survivors, very emotional when he shared the story, that out of that difficult situation and despair, they acknowledged that the whole nation was united in praying for them. One thing I want to share today, as we deliberate every day, the people of Fiji are praying for this nation.

For the Methodist Church, the meeting starts tomorrow. The Attorney-General's Office has reached out to our prayer warriors to pray for the nation and the Constitution. We are here today because of the prayers, that one vote, we are here today. We came to this Parliament without the numbers to change the Constitution, but God worked in His own mysterious ways - *meda vakavinavinaka tiko, marau tiko*.

I want to inform honourable Usamate – Koro Sea, rough *toka*, *ena kila vinak na Turaga Speaker*.” Whatever you may say about me standing here, I am here because it is pre-ordained time. *Da vakanuinui vinaka tiko, qo sa qai dina saraga*.

I remember the honourable Prime Minister sharing with a person from Lomaiviti when he opened the Housing Authority Estate in Nepani. This gentleman used to play for the Lomaiviti team and the honourable Prime Minister said, “*Lomaiviti mai, mai, mai!*”

Vakanuinui vei keda kecekece, vei kemuni na Turaga na Speaker, honourable Leader of the Opposition and the Members. We have the elections coming closer, it is coming, we are waiting for the referendum on the Constitution at the end of this month, we hope and pray that God is going to guide this nation to be more victorious in the future.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

[Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) (Amendment) Bill 2026 moved under Standing Order 51 and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights]

MR. SPEAKER.- As a footnote, talking about Lomaiviti and Koro Sea, I can vouch that it is a pretty rough one and the Navy boys will agree with that. I will tell you a story. When I was taking my children to their mother's village at Namacu, we were travelling on a very small boat called the *Tai Kabara*. It was rough and rocking everywhere and my father who was a sailor, turned around and said, “For goodness sake, why did you marry a lady from this island?”

(Laughter)

MR. SPEAKER.- We have endured, so that is all that matters.

ELECTORAL (REGISTRATION OF VOTERS) (AMENDMENT) BILL 2026

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

That the -

- (a) Electoral (Registration of Voters) (Amendment) Bill 2026 be considered by Parliament without delay;

- (b) Electoral Registration of Voters (Amendment) Bill, passed through one stage in a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) Bill must be immediately referred to the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights and that the Standing Committee must report on the Bill at the next sitting of Parliament in September; and
- (d) Upon presentation of the report of the Bill by the Standing Committee, the Bill must be debated, voted upon by Parliament, with the right of reply given to me as the Member moving this motion.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the Bill that has been handed out now is the Bill to amend the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) (Amendment) Bill. That is correct, we are on the right track now.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, my apologies, I had spoken on the Political Parties Act previously.

Now I am going to speak on the Electoral (Registration of Voters) (Amendment) Bill 2026 to be now considered by Parliament. The Bill will make a number of targeted amendments to the Electoral Registration of Voters Act 2012 to align with the reforms proposed under the Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2026. The amendments strengthen the integrity of the voter registration framework and introduce provisions relating to corrupt and illegal elective practice. The Bill also updates the terminology to ensure consistency with the Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these amendments are intended to promote public confidence, if any, in our electoral system by ensuring that the voter registration remains robust, transparent and aligned with contemporary electoral standards. The Bill supports the broader objective of safeguarding the integrity of Fiji's democratic processes and ensuring accountability for electoral misconduct. I commend the Bill to Parliament.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion. At the end of the debate, I will invite the mover once more to speak and exercise his right of reply.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, that debacle just shows exactly why Committees need more time. That debacle, when my very good friend, the learned Minister was talking about Koro Sea and all of this, he brought the wrong copy of the Bill.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. J. USAMATE.- He started talking about the wrong copy of the Bill. My colleague, honourable Koya said, "He is too slow, sometimes he is too fast." So let me just tell the honourable Acting Attorney-General that my grandmother came from Koro. I am very familiar with the Koro Sea – *Vatulawa*, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is important that when the honourable Acting Attorney-General of this country brings laws into this House, that he has everything correct. That is why I have made the suggestion that some of these Bills....

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- Point of Order!

HON. J. USAMATE.- What number?

MR. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- You are not the Speaker!

Just a point of clarification, Mr. Speaker, Sir, if I may be allowed, I think it is not the honourable Acting Attorney-General's fault. It is the way the Bill was distributed into the House. So, for honourable Usamate to stand up and belittle the honourable Acting Attorney-General, I think he is misleading the House.

MR. SPEAKER.- I take the point. In fact, if there was any mistake, it was probably our Secretariat because you are right. The way we deal with these three Bills in the order of how it was done, I think the error of oversight was probably from the Secretariat in giving the wrong Bill to you when we were discussing the second Bill instead of the third. With that, I think it clarifies the issue and honourable Usamate, you were going to speak anyway.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Sir. I think this whole debacle, whether it is the fault of the honourable learned Acting Attorney-General, or his co-ordination with the staff, it is a problem of execution. When you have a problem of execution, Mr. Speaker, Sir, you either execute within the confines of what you are responsible for and also everyone else along the supply chain.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Point of Order!

MR. SPEAKER.- Point of Order, honourable Tabuya

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, on relevance, can he speak to Standing Order 51 and the Bill before the House instead of berating an honest mistake, now that it has been acknowledged, I think he should be more gracious as a Member as acknowledged by the honourable Speaker, please withdraw your comments.

MR. SPEAKER.- I accept that. You carry on.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Sir, and as I was saying, when you are looking at execution, you execute within the confines of what you have responsibility for and if there are other organisations that are involved in that, you also manage that particular process. In this case, it would include the Secretariat.

My point, Mr. Speaker, Sir, when I was talking, that the Committee needed more time. It is precisely because we need to pick up problems that might happen, whether the honourable Minister is going too fast or too slow. We were talking about electoral systems here. A lot of these things have cursory grants, say some of these things are very good for us in terms of making sure that we have a strong electoral system. I think, if we are trying to rush three legislations in one month, that is quite a lot.

Now, the learned Acting Attorney-General said, "we have already done the consultations." You have done it as the Executive. When the Committee does it, we do it as the Legislature. You do it from the lens of people that are executing, carrying out the dictates of this Parliament. However, you must also give time to the people that represent the people, legislature, to also carry out its consultation. So, there is a distinct separation between these two things.

The Government needs to be very careful not to go down the path of thinking that when government has done its consultations, that means Parliament has. These are two separate things. That is the point that I would like to make, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I think there is not enough time for your Parliamentary Committee that is working on your behalf and on behalf of the voters of Fiji to have adequate time to adequately go through this particular case.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I just wanted to add on to what honourable Usamate has stated. I think the honourable Acting Attorney-General got confused because he was talking about the Koro Sea then he moved on to Gau. Knowing very well, Sir, you have a very traditional connection to Gau, and that is where he came into that confusion. If he wants to talk about Gau, I think he has to present something to you before he can talk about Gau.

MR. SPEAKER.- Point taken.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister, can you exercise your right of reply now?

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the three Bills are related and the amendments are from a lived experience - SODELPA, People's Alliance Party, and other Parties. With one month, I am sure you will have all the opportunities to go through it. It is just a matter of execution, but that is the call of the Chair, not you.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that through the experience of this Committee, they have been dedicated, committed to the work that they have done over the last three years, I am sure with the urgency that is vested in them on this, they will deliver and will table a report before September.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, I move:

That Parliament adjourns until Monday, 28th September, 2026 at 9.30 a.m.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Mr. Speaker, I second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, that concludes the end of our sitting. I thank you all for your contribution throughout the week. There is no news from Ashwin today.

I am just listening to the last intervention by honourable Jone Usamate, he uses the word “execute” a few times and I thought he probably was thinking of the Lelean team playing rugby tomorrow in the Deans final. So, I wish all school teams in the Deans every success in tomorrow's big showdown at the HFC Stadium.

I now declare Parliament adjourned until Monday, 28th September, 2026.

The Parliament adjourned at 3.48 p.m.

ANNEXURE I

Reply to Written Question No. 191/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government (Ref. Page 1887)



**MINISTER FOR HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
(Hon. M.K. Nalumisa)**

Reply to Question No. 191/2026 is as follows:

	Year		Budget (\$)	Expenditure (\$)		
Ba	FY2023/24	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	FY2024/25	1. Refurbishment of Tavua Park in collaboration with Ba Motor Parts	25,000	86,000	\$9,482.98 Council contribution and \$76,517.02 funded by Ba Motor Parts	Completed
		2. Govind Park Redevelopment Phase 2 Project	8,284,476.46	8,284,476.46	Government Funded	Completed
		Total		8,370,476.46		
	FY2025/26	1. Refurbishment of Namosau Park in collaboration with Ba Motor Parts	10,000	86,000	\$8,629.15 Council contribution and \$77,370.85 funded by Ba Motor Parts	Completed
		2. Govind Park Redevelopment Phase 2 Project	250,872.18	250,872.18	Government Funded	Completed
Rakiraki	FY2023/24	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	FY2024/25	Rakiraki Market Upgrade	342,044	Nil	Government Funded	Incomplete. To be completed in FY 2026/2027
	FY2025/26	Rakiraki Market Upgrade	335,000	Nil	Government Funded	Incomplete. To be completed in FY 2026/2027
Nausori	FY2023/24	1. Korovou Market Projects: installation of ceiling and wall fans and upgrading of meter box wiring and rewire market from old wiring 2. 2 x new parking meter 3. Shredding machine 4. FDB Loan Repayment – Nausori Market & Bus Stand	1. 4,000 2. 20,000 3. 1,600 4. 692,486	1. 3,650 2. 18,819.37 3. 1,559.33 4. 609,971.30	1. RLA Govt Grant 2. Council Funds 3. Council Funds 4. Council Funds	1. Completed 2. Completed 3. Completed 4. Completed
	FY2024/25	1. Nausori Bus stand renovating / painting – Punjas signage hiring advance payments 2. Korovou Markets renovations 3. Nausori Market painting 4. Nausori market CCTV outside 5. Bridge night club property renovation / painting 6. FDB Loan Repayment – Nausori Market & Bus Stand	1. 9,000 2. 10,000 3. 4,000 4. 5,000 5. 5,000 6. 603,000	1. 9,033.71 2. 8,322.82 3. 3,914.60 4. 5,382.76 5. 4,322.25 6. 454,999.86	1. Council funds 2. RLA – Govt Grant 3. Council Funds 4. Council Funds 5. Council Funds 6. Council Funds	1. Completed 2. Completed 3. Completed 4. Completed 5. Completed 6. Completed
	FY2025/26	1. Nausori fish market renovations / air con 2. Nausori main office renovations / painting 3. Bank of Baroda property renovations / tiling 4. CBD change room 5. Nakasi return and earn 6. Sheniz fashions council property – maintenance 7. Nausori Market CCTV	1. 10,000 2. 10,000 3. 10,000 4. 5,000 5. 15,000 6. 2,000 7. 6,000 8. 904,000	1. 8,400.10 2. 11,068.70 3. 7,054.24 4. 1,360.95 5. 8,846.60 6. 785.45 7. 3,200 8. 866,385.06	1. Council Funds 2. Council Funds 3. Council Funds 4. Council Funds 5. Council Funds 6. Council Funds 7. Council Funds 8. Council Funds	1. Completed 2. Completed 3. Completed 4. Completed 5. Completed 6. Completed 7. Completed 8. Completed

		8. FDB Loan Repayment – Nausori Market & Bus Stand				
Lami	FY2023/24	1. Purchase of Ride on Mower 2. Johnny Singh Park upgrade 3. Market upgrade 4. Tikaram Park & Marine Drive Light Upgrade	1. 10,000 2. 10,000 3. 12,000 4. 8,000	1. 9,500 2. 9,000 3. 11,100 4. 8,900	1. Council Funds 2. Council Funds 3. Council Funds 4. Council Funds	1. Completed 2. Completed 3. Completed 4. Completed
	FY2024/25	1. Main Office Upgrade 2. Cnr Vou & Nukuwatu Property Upgrade 3. Johnny Singh Upgrade	1. 35,000 2. 30,000 3. 5,000	1. 33,000 2. 36,000 3. 9,900	1. Council Funds 2. Council Funds 3. Council Funds	1. Completed 2. Completed 3. Completed
	FY2025/26	1. Ragnath Seawall Upgrade 2. Johnny Singh Park Upgrade 3. Kalekana Storm Water Upgrade 4. Council Depot Storm Water Upgrade	1. 25,000 2. 30,000 3. 10,000 4. 15,000	1. 26,000 2. 39,437 3. 11,963 4. 26,000	1. Council Funds 2. Council Funds 3. Donor/Council Funds 4. Council Funds	1. Completed 2. Completed 3. Completed 4. Completed
Savusavu	FY2023/24	1. Savusavu Market Upgrade Project	3,882,247	2,892,436.08	Government Grant and UN Women Funds	Ongoing in this FY
	FY2024/25	1. Savusavu Market Upgrade 2. Relocation of Existing Electrical Main Switch Board – Market Premises 3. Market Tables Supply and Installation	1. 2,852,178 2. 4,839.70 3. 133,945.58	1. 1,848,212 2. 4,839.70 3. 133,945.58	1. Government Grant and UN Women Funds 2. UN Women Funds 3. UN Women Funds	1. Completed 2. Ongoing in this FY 3. Completed
	FY2025/26	1. Savusavu Market Upgrade Project 2. Relocation of Existing Electrical Main Switch Board – Market Premises 3. Retention for Market Tables	1. 11,040 2. 4,682.11 3. 7,049.77	1. 11,040 2. 4,682.11 3. 7,049.77	1. UN Women's Funds 2. UN Women Funds 3. UN Women Funds	1. Completed (final payment) 2. Completed 3. Completed
Tavua	FY2023/24	Tavua Family Park (Children's Park)	63,000	63,000	Fiji Water Foundation	Completed
	FY2024/25	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	FY2025/26	1. Senior Citizens Park 2. Installation of 9 parking meters	1. 59,000 2. 140,000	1. 18,000 – funded from Gold n Water Carnival 2. 140,000	1. 41,000 funded by Fiji Water Foundation. Balance was funded from Gold n Water Carnival 18,000 2. Government Funded	1. The project in progress 2. Completed
Labasa	FY2023/24	Upgrade of Subrail Park Stadium for Fiji Fact 2024	100,000	92,174	Council Fund	Completed
	FY2024/25	Sealing works for Labasa Market and Taxi Stand area	220,000	220,000	Council Fund	Completed
	FY2025/26	1. Upgrade of Subrail Park Facility for BOG 2026 2. Construction of Return and Earn Buy Back Centre 3. Construction of Seawall Behind Civic Centre 4. New fish market/seadfood centre 5. Development of car park facility through public private partnership	1. 20,000 2. 10,000 3. 5,000 4. 100,000 5. 2,000,000	1. 20,000 2. 10,000 3. 5,000 4. Nil 5. Nil	1. Council Fund 2. Council Fund 3. Council Fund 4. Donor Funds 5. Donor Funds	1. Completed 2. Completed 3. Completed 4. Spillover for FY 2026/27 5. Project supports by Extra Supermarket North for FY 2026/2027
Sigatoka	FY2023/24	1. Mission Road Carpark Sealing 2. 50 Public Bins in Town Boundary 3. Health & Building Office Upgrade	1. 44,347.83 2. 20,000 3. 80,000	45,000 21,009.27 72,358.56	1. Government Grant 2. Government Grant 3. Council Funds	1. Work in progress 2. Completed 3. Completed
	FY2024/25	1. Infrastructure and Landscaping 2. IT Infrastructure	1. 236,065.29 2. 167,695.71	1. 73,274.16 2. 38,757.38	1. Council Funds 2. Council Funds	1. Work in progress 2. Work in progress
	FY2025/26	1. Riverside Public Convenience 2. Civil Building Upgrade 3. Children's Park (Mission Road / Kedrakuku) 4. Municipal market and public convenience (gutter / washroom doors) 5. Beautification Project 6. Dump Survey (Redefinition) 7. Etuba Land – Car Wash 8. Cuvu Market Electrical Works	1. 60,869.60 2. 39,130.50 3. 17,391.40 4. 30,434.80 5. 41,478.30 6. 4,444.44 7. 26,087 8. 13,043.50 9. 45,869.60 10. 23,478.30 11. 13,043.50	1. 5,022.22 2. Nil 3. 4,251.82 4. 12,235.95 5. 20,359.11 6. Nil 7. Nil 8. Nil 9. Nil 10. 17,301.44 11. Nil	1. Government grant 2. Nil 3. Council Fund 4. Council Fund 5. Council Fund 6. Nil 7. Nil 8. Nil 9. Nil 10. Council Fund 11. Nil	1. Work in progress 2. Project on Hold 3. Work in progress 4. Work in progress 5. Work in progress 6. Work in progress 7. Project on hold 8. Project on hold 9. Project on hold

		9. Enterprise Resource Planning 10. CCTV Town Boundary/Cemetery / Dumpsite 11. Sound and Security System – Civil Building				10. Work in progress 11. Project on hold
Lautoka	FY2023/24	1. New Coffee Shop – Botanical Garden 2. Namoli green light market 3. Consultancy services – Churchill Park Naming Rights 4. Churchill Park Ground #3 – Pump & Lights 5. Extension of Change Room & Referees Room Churchill Park 6. Botanical Garden Lovers Bridge 7. Depot Office Renovation	1. 424,058.02 2. 885,324.20 3. 0 4. 0 5. 0 6. 0 7. 0	1. 268,223.27 2. 130,376.12 3. 36,077.56 4. 9,929.54 5. 22,429.56 6. 7,656.78 7. 328.70	1. Council Fund 2. Council Fund 3. Council Fund 4. Council Fund 5. Council Fund 6. Council Fund 7. Council Fund	1. Completed 2. Completed 3. Completed 4. Completed 5. Completed 6. Completed 7. Completed
	FY2024/25	1. New Coffee Shop – Botanical Garden 2. Namoli Green Night Market 3. Consultancy Services - Churchill Parking Naming Rights 4. Churchill Park Ground #3 – Pump & Lights 5. Depot Office Renovation 6. Upgrade of Power Supply at Botanical Garden 7. Maintenance of Washroom at Bus Stand	1. 155,834.75 2. 754,948.08 3. 400,000 4. 0 5. 400,000 6. 90,000 7. 40,000	1. 118,545.60 2. 76,621.18 3. 2,970.73 4. 221,507.96 5. 19,942.16 6. 9,054.35 7. 31,005.07	1. Council Fund 2. Council Fund 3. Council Fund 4. Council Fund 5. Council Fund 6. Council Fund 7. Council Fund	1. Completed 2. Completed 3. Completed 4. Completed 5. Completed 6. Completed 7. Completed
	FY2025/26	1. Bus Station Pavement 2. Painting Sugar City Mall – Cherry picker and material 3. Market Triangle 4. Half Moon Bench – Marine Drive material 5. Waiyavi Creek 6. Bus station outside painting, roof maintenance and kiosk renovation – material 7. Berar place repair fence 8. Army Berack fabrication and installation of steel steps 9. Repair roof and fence at 5 Tulusa Place, replace solar panel and tank	1. 3,120,000 2. 100,000 3. 120,000 4. 50,000 5. 200,000 6. 130,000 7. 100,000 8. 0 9. 250,000	1. 2,985,411.78 2. 41,619.75 3. 94,017.58 4. 6,338 5. 26,000 6. 47,105.20 7. 2,029.19 8. 6,674 9. 5,865	1. Loan 2. Council Fund 3. Council Fund 4. Council Fund 5. Council Fund 6. Council Fund 7. Council Fund 8. Council Fund 9. Council Fund	1. Completed 2. Completed 3. Completed 4. Completed 5. Work In Progress 6. Completed 7. Completed 8. Completed 9. Completed
Nadi	FY2023/24	1. CCTV Cameras 2. Flood Lights – PC Park 3. Bird Netting – Nadi & Namaka Market 4. Viti Mini Bus Shelter 5. Capital Development Concept Designs – Expression of Interest was called for Nadi Town Multi-Storey Carpark Design Competition	1. 30,000 2. 45,000 3. 0 4. 0 5. 0	1. 5,783 2. 0 3. 74,900 4. 18,514 5. 5,217	1. Council Fund 2. Council Fund 3. Council Fund 4. Council Fund 5. Council Fund	1. Completed 2. Not Completed 3. Completed 4. Completed 5. Completed
	FY2024/25	1. CCTV Camera 2. Upgrade of Flood Lights 0 PC Park 3. Lift – Namaka Market 4. Bird Neet	1. 30,000 2. 42,000 3. 19,000 4. 0	1. 12,478 2. 0 3. 16,283 4. 32,278	1. Council Fund 2. Council Fund 3. Council Fund 4. Council Fund	1. Completed 2. Not completed 3. Completed 4. Completed
	FY2025/26	1. Parks – ATS Park 2. Parks – Namaka Park 3. Minibus Shelter 4. Roller Shutters 5. CCTV Camera 6. Nadi Bus Stand 7. NTC Chamber Refurbishment	1. 12,000 2. 5,000 3. 10,000 4. 0 5. 30,000 6. 10,000 7. 0	1. 10,968.55 2. 2,026.82 3. 8,890.95 4. 6,166.67 5. 13,046.24 6. 1,303.25 7. 4,168.54	1. Council Fund 2. Council Fund 3. Council Fund 4. Council Fund 5. Council Fund 6. Council Fund 7. Council Fund	1. Completed 2. Completed 3. Completed 4. Completed 5. Completed 6. Completed 7. Completed
Nasinu	FY2023/24	1. Makoi Market and Multipurpose Upgrades 2. Valelevu Office Renovation – Budget	1. 33,000 2. 432,000	1. 33,000 2. 0	1. Government Grant 2. Council Fund Project is shelved non availability of fund	1. Completed 2. Not completed

					and reprioritisation to Valelevu complex	
	FY2024/25	1. Ward 1 – Makoi, Tovata, Tuirara, Laqere – Drainage Works 2. Ward 2 – Kalabu, Valelevu, New Town, Naveiwakau – Drainage Works 3. Ward 3 – Caubati – Drainage Works 4. Ward 4 – Navosai, Narere, Muanikoso – Drainage Works 5. Ward 5 – Laucala Beach, Kinoya – Drainage Works 6. Ward 6 – Nadera – Drainage Works 7. Ward 7 – Caqiri, Nasole, Nadawa, Nepani – Drainage Works 8. Valelevu Market – Upgrading work to include general painting, installation of industrial fans in the market, proper marking of space 9. Vunidogo Market – Upgrading of Vunidogo Market, upgrade market ventilation, general painting, marking of spaces 10. Laqere Market office space, upgrade of sitting area and staff kitchen 11. To construct 9m x 6m timber structure kava bure and rent out to the successful bidder to general revenue to Council 12. To construct a double storey structure for or Depot. Depot to include proper changing facilities, depot office, tools and materials storage area, proper depot garage, nursery. 13. To design and construct a 4 storey Nasinu Municipal Complex. The mix build complex will include modern market, office space, supermarket, handicraft centre, convention centre, carpark at the current Council and kiosk site. 14. To design and construct a 3 storey commercial complex. The mix build complex will include modern market for people of Narere, office space, supermarket and convention centre, fitness centre and carpark at the current market site. 15. To design and construct a first ever mangrove park at the mangrove protected area in Laucala Beach, Kinoya. The project will include the construction of walkways, towers, mangrove centre, and in	1. 10,500 2. 10,500 3. 15,000 4. 20,000 5. 350,000 6. 7,781,466 7. 4,502,334 8. 1,200,000 9. 500,000 10. 58,700 11. 835,000	No utilisation	No funding was provided	All projects not completed

		addition, road side market facilities. 16. Valelevu Office Renovation 17. Health Department – Tree Planting Nursery 18. Depo Works / Construction				
	FY2025/26	1. Valelevu Complex – Budget 2. Renovation Nasau Park / Pavillion / Ground / PC 3. Renovation at Council Depot 4. Renovation of Council Property (Bowling Club) 5. Renovation Work – Public Convenience 6. Renovation of Council Property (Town Hall) 7. Renovation of Council Properties (Nasova House) 8. Projects – Drainage Rehabilitation	1. 4,500,000 2. 5,000 3. 500 4. 1,000 5. 1,000 6. 3,000 7. 600 8. 10,000	1. 0 400,00 – UNW 290,000 – MLG 2. 656.32 3. 125.53 4. 101.84 5. 229.84 6. 2,540.87 7. 6,137.33 8. 500	1. Council Funded. The project is awaiting financing from lending agency grant and UN Women 2. Council Funds 3. Council Funds 4. Council Funds 5. Council Funds 6. Council Funds 7. Council Funds 8. Government Grant 9. Government Grant 10. Government Grant	Not complete
Suva	FY2023/24	1. Ratu Sukuna Park Facelift 2. Mosquito Island Utility upgrade 3. Recreational Parks Upgrade 4. Raiwaqa Market Upgrade 5. Market and Bus Stand Upgrades 6. Thurston Garden designs 7. Albert Park upgrade 8. CCTV 9. Police Post Upgrade 10. Property Upgrade and Beautification 11. Foreshore carpark upgrade 12. Flourish Sections Upgrade (SVM) 13. Vunisea Market	1. 5,000,000 2. 400,000 3. 350,000 4. 2,500,000 5. 2,500,000 6. 100,000 7. 200,000 8. 50,000 9. 100,000 10. 1,400,000 11. 0 12. 0 13. 0	1. 5,079,914.06 2. – 3. – 4. – 5. – 6. – 7. – 8. – 9. – 10. – 11. 475,441.79 12. 1,857 13. 8,719.62	Council Funded, Government Fund and UN Women	1. Project in progress roll over from last FY. 2. Project not commenced due to re-prioritisation of other projects 3. Project not commenced due to re-prioritisation of other projects 4. Project not commenced due to re-prioritisation of other projects 5. Bus stand funded by FRA (complete). Market under OPEX R&M. 6. Project not commenced due to re-prioritisation of other projects 7. Project not commenced due to re-prioritisation of other projects 8. Project not commenced due to re-prioritisation of other projects 9. Project not commenced due to re-prioritisation of other projects 10. Project not commenced due to re-prioritisation of other projects

						11. Project completed 12. Ongoing 13. Ongoing
	FY2024/25	1. Ratu Sukuna Re-development 2. New Fish Market (Suva) – replace and extend roof and build a cantilever for storage space 3. Construct 5 new roadside markets @ the cost of \$30,000 each 4. Fencing of Flower section 5. Replace rusted roof of the shower rooms, the cubicles and the toilets @ Olympic Pool 6. Replace sand in filter pumps, replace old filter motors – Olympic Swimming Pool 7. Installations of 10,000 litre water tanks with electric water pump – Olympic Swimming Pool 8. Rural vendors accommodation @ Kadavu Market 9. Vunisea Market Renovations 10. Vunisea Additional work 11. Solar street light *3 @ Jittu Estate 12. Parks Upgrade – Statham & Talbot 13. Civic Admin. Bldg Refurbishment 14. Civic Tower Upgrade 15. Civic House Upgrade	1. 0 2. 50,000 3. 60,000 4. 10,000 5. 100,000 6. 100,000 7. 26,990 8. 50,000 9. – 10. – 11. 40,000 12. 100,000 13. 200,000 14. 300,000 15. 300,000	1. 2,061,373.17 2. – 3. – 4. – 5. – 6. – 7. – 8. – 9. 30,063.02 10. 4,960 11. – 12. 6,193.47 13. 3,042.17 14. 3,470.60 15. -	All Council Funded	1. Project Completed 2. Ongoing 3. Project not commenced due to reprioritisation of other projects 4. Project not commenced due to reprioritisation of other projects 5. Project not complete 6. Project ongoing 7. Project not commenced due to reprioritisation of other projects 8. Project not commenced due to reprioritisation of other projects 9. Project completed 10. Project completed 11. Project did not commence 12. Project ongoing 13. Project ongoing 14. Project ongoing 15. Project ongoing
	FY2025/26	1. Ratu Sukuna Park Project 2. Parks Upgrade – Statham Park 3. Replace of filter pump – Olympic Pool 4. Replace Rush Roof and Shower – Olympic Pool 5. CCTV – Market & Bus Stand 6. Civil Tower Upgrade 7. SCC Chamber Upgrade (digitisation) 8. Suva Market / Fish Market Relocations 9. Drainage upgrade 10. Parks Upgrade – Statham & Talbot 11. Civic Admin. Bldg Refurbishment 12. Annex Building 13. Civic House Upgrade 14. Civic Tower Upgrade 15. Suva Depot Redevelopment Design 16. Raiwaqa Market Design	1. 0 2. 0 3. 0 4. 0 5. 0 6. 0 7. 50,000 8. 100,000 9. 50,000 10. 100,000 11. 163,000 12. 200,000 13. 100,000 14. 390,000 15. 50,000 16. 50,000	1. 116,819.30 2. 2,946.08 3. – 4. – 5. – 6. 277,146 7. – 8. – 9. – 10. – 11. – 12. – 13. – 14. – 15. – 16. –	All Council Funded	1. Ongoing 2. Project Completed 3. Ongoing 4. Complete 5. Project Ongoing 6. Project completed 7. Project not commenced due to reprioritisation of other projects 8. Project ongoing 9. Project not commenced due to reprioritisation of other projects 10. Project ongoing 11. Project not commenced

						due to reprioritisation of other projects
						12. Project note complete due to reprioritisation of other projects
						13. Ongoing project
						14. Ongoing project
						15. Ongoing project
						16. Ongoing project

Ba Town Council

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with respect to Ba Town Council, no capital projects were undertaken in the 2023/2024 financial year.

In 2024/2025 and 2025/2026, the Council completed the refurbishment of Tabua and Namosau Parks in collaboration with Ba Motor Parts, as well as the Govind Park Redevelopment Phase 2 Project, with support from Government.

Nausori Town Council

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with respect to Nausori Town Council, several capital projects were undertaken over the last three financial years to improve market facilities, public infrastructure and council properties.

The Council completed various market upgrades, renovations, CCTV installations and improvements to public public and council-owned facilities. These included works at Korovou Market, Nausori Market, Nausori Bus Stand and the Nausori Fish Market.

The Council also continued its FDB loan repayment for the Nausori Market and Bus Stand, which remains ongoing.

Rakiraki Town Council

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with respect to Rakiraki Town Council, no capital projects were undertaken in the 2023/2024 financial year.

The Council subsequently commenced the Rakiraki Market Upgrade Project, with Government funding of \$342,044 in 2024/2025 and a further allocation of \$335,000 in 2025/2026. The project remains ongoing and is expected to be completed in the 2026/2027 financial year.

Lami Town Council

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with respect to Lami Town Council, several projects were undertaken over the last three financial years to improve public facilities, recreational spaces, council infrastructure and drainage systems.

Key projects included upgrades to Johnny Sing Park, the market and Council facilities, as well as the Ragunath Seawall and stormwater improvements. All projects were completed, with funding primarily from Council resources and donor support for the Kalekana Stormwater Upgrade.

Savusavu Town Council

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with respect to Savusavu Town Council, key capital projects over the last three financial years focused on upgrading market infrastructure and essential electrical services.

In 2023/2024, the Council commenced the Savusavu Market Upgrade Project, with expenditure of \$2,892,436.08, funded by Government and UN Women.

In 2024/2025, the Council continued and completed the Market Upgrade Project, with expenditure of \$1,948,733.96. The Council also commenced the relocation of the market's main electrical switchboard, at a cost of \$4,839.70, which remained ongoing during the financial year.

During the 2025/2026 financial year, a final payment of \$18,089.77 was made towards the completed Savusavu Market Upgrade Project. The Council also completed the relocation of the existing electrical main switchboard at the Market Premises, with expenditure of \$4,682.11.

Tavua Town Council

Mr. Speaker, Sir, relating to Tavua Town Council, the Council completed the Tavua Family Park (Children's Park) I 2023/2024, at a cost of \$63,000, funded by the Fiji Water Foundation. No capital projects were undertaken in 2024/2025.

In 2025-2026, the Council commenced the Senior Citizens Park, with an approved budget of \$59,000 supported by the Fiji Water Foundation and Golden Water Carnival, which remains ongoing. The Council also completed the installation of nine parking meters, at a cost of \$140,000 funded by Government.

Labasa Town Council

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Labasa Town Council undertook capital projects over the last three financial years focussed on recreational facilities, market infrastructure and essential municipal services.

In 2023-2024, the Council completed the Subrail Park Stadium upgrade for Fiji FACT 2024, with expenditure of \$92,174 against an approved budget of \$100,000, funded by Council.

In 2024-2025, the Council completed sealing works at the Labasa Market and Taxi Stand, at a cost of \$220,000, funded by Council.

In 2025-2026, the Council completed the Subrail Park upgrade, Return and Earn Buy Back Centre, and seawall behind the Civic Centre, with combined approved funding of \$35,000. The Council also commenced the Fish Market/Seafood Centre, budgeted at \$100,000, which remains a spillover project into 2026-2027.

Additionally, the Council identified a \$2 million carpark development under a PPP, with no expenditure incurred as of 30th June, 2026.

Sigatoka Town Council

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Sigatoka Town Council undertook capital projects over the last three financial years focussed on improving municipal infrastructure, public amenities and environmental services.

In 2023-2024, the Council undertook the Mission Road Carpark sealing, installation of 50 public bins, and health and building office upgrades. The bin initiative and office upgrade were completed, while the carpark works remained ongoing.

In 2024-2025, the Council continued infrastructure, landscaping and IT improvements, funded through Council resources.

In 2025-2026, projects included Riverside Public Convenience Improvements, Children's Park development, market and public convenience upgrades, town beautification, and dump survey and

redefinition works, among other initiatives.

Several projects remain ongoing or on hold, reflecting the Council's continued efforts to improve municipal services and public amenities.

Lautoka City Council

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with respect to Lautoka City Council, the Council undertook a range of capital projects over the last three financial years to improve public facilities, recreational spaces and municipal infrastructure.

During the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 financial years, the Council completed projects at the Botanical Garden, Namoli Green Night Market, Churchill Park, Civil Building, Council Depot and Bus Stand, funded through Council funds.

In the 2025-2026 financial year, the Council completed the Bus Station Pavement Project, funded through a loan, as well as several improvements to public spaces and Council facilities. Works at Waiyavi Creek remain in progress.

Nadi Town Council

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Nadi Town Council undertook capital projects over the last three financial years focussed on public safety, market and transport facilities, recreational spaces and municipal infrastructure.

In 2023-2024, projects included CCTV installation, bird netting at Nadi and Namaka Markets, a minibus shelter, concept designs for the proposed multi-storey carpark, and Prince Charles Park floodlight upgrades. The floodlight works remained incomplete.

In 2024-2025, the Council completed CCTV installations, Namaka Market lift installation and bird netting works, while the Prince Charles Park floodlight upgrade remained ongoing.

In 2025-2026, the Council completed improvements to ATS Park, Namaka Park, Nadi Bus Stand and Council Chambers, as well as a minibus shelter, roller shutters and CCTV installations, funded through Council resources.

Suva City Council

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with respect to Suva City Council, the Council undertook a range of capital projects over the last three financial years aimed at enhancing public amenities, recreational facilities, market infrastructure and Council assets.

During this period, key investments included the Ratu Sukuna Park Redevelopment, upgrades to parks and recreational facilities, market and public infrastructure improvements, and refurbishment of Council buildings and facilities. While several projects were successfully completed, others remain ongoing or have been reprioritised to align with the Council's evolving priorities and available resources.

Levuka Town Council

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with respect to Levuka Town Council, the Council undertook a range of capital projects over the last three financial years, focussing on improving market facilities, public amenities, recreational spaces, drainage infrastructure and Council properties.

During this period, the Council completed several projects, including improvements to the Levuka Market, Nasau Park and Council-owned facilities. The Council also continued works on selected infrastructure and community projects, with some remaining ongoing or not completed.

Nasinu Town Council

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with respect to Nasinu Town Council, the Council identified and undertook a range of capital projects over the last three financial years, focussing on market facilities, drainage infrastructure, the Council properties and municipal development.

Several projects, including the Makoi Market and Multipurpose Upgrade, were completed, while several other projects were deferred, reprioritised or remain pending due to funding constraints and financing arrangements.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the response to the written question is respectfully submitted.

ANNEXURE II

Reply to Written Question No. 192/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government (Ref. Page 1887)



MINISTER FOR HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
(Hon. M.K. Nalumisa)

Reply to Question No. 192/2026 is as follows:

1. Mandate of the Housing Authority

The Housing Authority is established under the Housing Act to assist workers and their families to obtain suitable accommodation at the lowest reasonable cost. Its mandate includes developing and selling residential lots and houses, providing housing loans, and offering other facilities that enable Fijians to purchase, construct or otherwise obtain their own homes.

2. Delivery of 267 Fully Serviced Lots

One of the most significant achievements was the completion of the Nepani and Davuilevu subdivisions, which together delivered a total of 267 fully serviced residential lots.

2.1 Nepani Phase 1

At Nepani Phase 1, the Housing Authority delivered 174 fully serviced residential lots in February 2026, comprising:

- 101 lots designated for Model Homes;
- 36 Residential B lots; and
- 37 Residential C and D lots.

The Authority completed the construction of all 101 Model Homes, marking its return to the direct construction of ready-built homes after approximately three decades. In July 2026, the first 31 families received the keys to their new homes. These households have an average annual income of \$28,814, demonstrating that the initiative is reaching families who would otherwise face significant barriers to entering the formal housing market.

- 21 families or 68 percent have annual household incomes of up to \$30,000; and
- 10 families or 32 percent have annual household incomes ranging from \$30,001 to \$50,024.

The allocation also reflects Government's commitment to assisting households with different needs. Of the 31 homes, 24 were allocated to general applicants, three to Public Rental Board tenants, two to HART beneficiaries and two other under the disability and disadvantaged category.

The remaining 70 Nepani Model Homes have been allocated in accordance with the Housing Authority's allocation policy. Successful applicants are currently undergoing loan processing and are expected to take possessions of their homes in September 2026.

The Authority has also advertised 36 Residential B lots, which are under evaluation. A further 37 Residential C and D lots will be advertised through an Expression of Interest

process, with applications to be submitted through the Housing Authority's customer portal.

2.2 Davuilevu

At Davuilevu, the Housing Authority delivered a further 93 serviced lots, comprising:

- 50 Model Home lots;
- 37 Residential C and D lots;
- 5 Residential B lots; and
- 1 Commercial lot.

The 50 Model Homes are expected to be occupied by successful customers in October 2026. The remaining residential and commercial lots will be advertised through an Expression of Interest process using the Authority's enhanced customer portal.

The delivery of Nepani and Davuilevu provides families with two pathways to home ownership: purchasing a fully serviced lot on which to construct their own home or purchasing a completed Model Home that is ready for occupation.

3. **Improving Access to Affordable Housing Finance**

Increasing the supply of housing must be supported by affordable financing. Under the Reserve Bank of Fiji, Housing Facility, concessionary funding is provided to participating lending institutions at an interest rate of 0.25 percent per annum for a period of five years. These funds are on-lent to eligible households earning below \$50,000 per annum. The RBF Board has increased the total funding allocation under the Facility from \$100 million to \$120 million, of which the Housing Authority has utilised approximately \$97 million to-date.

The Housing Authority introduced its lowest-even interest-rate structure to improve access to mortgage financing for low-and-middle-income households.

- Housings earning below \$30,000 per annum receive a fixed interest rate of 2 percent for the first five years, followed by a variable rate of 4 percent from the sixth year.
- Households earning between \$30,000 and \$50,000 per annum receive a fixed interest rate of 3.5 percent for the first five years, followed by a variable rate of 6 percent from the sixth year.

These concessionary rates reduce initial mortgage repayments and provide families with greater certainty during the early years of home ownership. Housing Authority financing is complemented by the Government's First Home Grant Assistance Programme, which reduces the amount eligible families are required to borrow and assists them in meeting the equity and construction costs associated with owning their first home.

4. **New Major Subdivision Developments**

During the 2025-2026 financial year, the Housing Authority commenced two major subdivision developments that are expected to deliver an additional 853 fully serviced lots. The contract for Tacirua Phase 2, valued at more than \$12 million, was awarded to Lomanitoba and is expected to deliver 310 fully serviced lots.

The Veikoba subdivision was awarded to China Railway First Group at a contract value of more than \$53 million. It is expected to deliver 543 fully serviced lots and represents the Housing Authority's largest development by monetary value.

Progress has also been made in securing funding for supporting infrastructure. This includes Government funding for a subdivision bridge and a feasibility study for water and sewerage services. The Authority is working with the Fiji Roads Authority and the Water Authority of Fiji to facilitate road access and essential utility services.

5. Progress on Other Housing Projects

Construction and enabling works continued across several other subdivisions during the financial year. Nepani Phase 2 is expected to be completed by October 2026, while Davuilevu Phase 2 is expected to be completed by September 2026.

The Korosalusalu project has been progressed to the tender-evaluation stage. Government funding has been secured for its package treatment plant, with the contract awarded to Oceania Water Group Pte Limited.

Tavakubu Phases 1 and 3 are undergoing tender evaluation, while progress has been made in obtaining survey-plan approvals for Tavakubu Phases 1 and 3, Davuilevu Phase 2 and Tavakubu Infill. Scheme planning and engineering-design work is also underway for the proposed Wairabetia and Waila subdivisions.

6. Formalisation of Informal Settlements

The Housing Authority continued working with the Ministry of Housing to formalise informal settlements and transition eligible families into secure home ownership.

At Tavakubu Phase 2, there are 57 sitting tenants of whom 47 have received Provisional Offer Letters. During the last financial year, 16 tenants were issued formal leases, while the remaining applications are being processed. Formal leases provide families with secure legal tenure, access to formal housing finance and services, and the confidence to invest in improving their homes. Through a further partnership between the Ministry and the Housing Authority, 15 residential lots – nine at Wainibuku and six at Makosoi were allocated to eligible families from the Nabua Muslim League, Veidogo and Kilikali informal settlements.

A total of 56 applications were received, of which 27 applications met the eligibility requirements. Successful applicants participated in a transparent ballot draw conducted in accordance with the Housing Authority's Lot and Model House Allocation Policy.

Seven of the 15 successful applicants are undergoing loan processing, while the remaining eight are completing the necessary compliance requirements before receiving formal offers. This initiative represents an important step in transitioning families from informal settlements into secure and formal housing.

7. Supporting Customer-led Home Construction

The Authority has also supported families who purchased serviced lots to construct their own homes. At Covata, 58 lots have been sold, while a further 25 lots have been sold at Makosoi. Customers at both developments have commenced preparing house plans and submitting applications to the Housing Authority for construction financing.

This progress demonstrates that the delivery of serviced land is translating into actual home construction and sustainable home ownership, supported by Housing Authority financing and applicable. Government grant assistance.

8. Improved Transparency and Service Delivery

These physical achievements have been accompanied by improvements in transparency and

service delivery. The Housing Authority has introduced a public barrel-draw process for allocating residential lots and Model Homes, together with a public objection process to verify the eligibility of provisionally selected applicants.

The Authority has also upgraded its lending system, introduced an Electronic Document Management System and migrated its Navision financial system to the Business Central platform. These reforms are intended to improve application processing, reduce administrative delays, strengthen accountability and provide customers with a more accessible and transparency service.

9. Outlook for the 2026-2027 Financial Year

The Housing Authority is finalising the construction and development of a further 702 housing products, comprising serviced vacant lots and ready-built Model Homes scheduled for delivery during the current financial year.

These include the remaining Model Homes at Nepani, 50 Model Homes at Davuilevu and 24 Model Homes at Tavakubu, together with residential, commercial and civil lots across Nepani, Davuilevu, Tavakubu, Covata, Makosoi, Wainibuku and Matavolivoli. A detailed breakdown is provided in Appendix 1.

10. Overall Contribution to Affordable Housing and Home Ownership

The Housing Authority's key achievements during the 2025-2026 financial year are summarised as follows:

- 267 fully serviced lots were delivered at Nepani and Davuilevu;
- 101 Model Homes were completed at Nepani; the first 31 families received the keys to their homes;
- 2 major subdivisions commenced at Tacirua and Veikoba, with a combined expected output of 853 serviced lots;
- families in informal settlements progressed towards secure legal tenure and formal home ownership;
- more affordable housing-finance arrangements were introduced; and
- a further 702 housing products are being prepared for delivery during the current financial year.

These achievements contribute directly to affordable housing by increasing the supply of serviced land and ready-built homes, reducing the cost of mortgage finance, providing secure tenure to families in informal settlements, and improving access to transparent housing-allocation processes.

Coalition Government recognises that the demand for affordable housing remains significant. The Ministry will continue working closely with the Housing Authority to accelerate project implementation, maintain transparent allocation processes, and ensure that housing developments are appropriately targeted towards low and middle income Fijian families.

Appendix 1: Housing Stock Scheduled for Sale and Delivery in 2026-2027

Stock Category	Subdivision	Product	Lots
New Stock	Nepani Phase 1	Vacant Residential B	36
New Stock	Nepani Phase 1	Vacant	34
New Stock	Nepani Phase 1	2-bedroom Model Homes	70
New Stock	Nepani Phase 1	2-bedroom Model Homes	50
New Stock	Davuilevu Phase 1	Vacant	42
New Stock	Davuilevu Phase 1	Commercial	1
New Stock	Davuilevu Phase 1	2-bedroom Model Homes	50

New Stock	Davuilevu Phases 2 and 3	Vacant	100
New Stock	Davuilevu Phases 2 and 3	Commercial	3
New Stock	Davuilevu Phases 2 and 3	Civic	3
New Stock	Davuilevu Phases 2 and 3	2-bedroom Model Homes	50
New Stock	Tavakubu Phases 1 and 3	Vacant	100
New Stock	Tavakubu Phases 1 and 3	Commercial	2
New Stock	Tavakubu Phases 1 and 3	Civic	2
New Stock	Tavakubu Phases 1 and 3	2-bedroom Model Homes	24
New Stock	Tavakubu Infill	Vacant	19
Old Stock	Covata	Vacant	43
Old Stock	Makosoi	Vacant	3
Old Stock	Makosoi	Vacant – Ministry of Housing	6
Old Stock	Wainibuku	Vacant	8
Old Stock	Matavolivoli	Vacant	6
Old Stock	Tavakubu Phase 2	Vacant	50
Subtotal – New Stock			586
Subtotal – Old Stock			116
Total			702

ANNEXURE III

Reply to Written Question No. 194/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Education (Ref. Page 1887)



MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
(Hon. A.M. Radrodro)

Reply to Question No. 194/2026 is as follows:

Tabulated below is the data on the number of students found in possession of drugs in primary and secondary school premises in the last 3 years:

Number of students found in possession of drugs	2023	2024	2025
Primary	1,578	1,658	1,508
Secondary	2,049	1,383	1,635
Total	3,627 (1.6 percent)	3,041 (1.36 percent)	3,143 (1.4 percent)

The increase in the numbers indicate the reported cases at the Counselling Hubs which were opened from 2023 to 2025 at Natabua High School, Labasa College, Levuka Public School and Nasinu Secondary School. Cases were also reported to the Child Protection Officers and the Counsellors in school. Most of the cases in schools are formally reported to the Counselling Hubs from school as compared to previous years which were referred to Substance Abuse Advisory Council (SAAC) Office.

The overall data indicates that a small percentage, which is less than 2 percent of students were involved in drug-related and this refers to the use of suki, cigarette, vaping, alcohol, inhalant glue and marijuana. It should be noted that there are no reported cases on the use of methamphetamine in school.

The Ministry, through SAAC and schools, not only records drug and substance-related incidents but also provides intervention support to students identified to be using drugs so they live a healthy life. The Ministry of Education also has School Drugs Policy, Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Management Policy and Counselling Policy in place that guide the teachers on standards procedures to address students who are involved in any drug cases.

The Ministry also works in collaboration with the parents, police department, health authorities, Child Welfare Unit, communities, faith-based organisations and other partners to address the issue of drugs.

The Ministry of Education has preventive programme which includes child protection training for teachers, student leaders, faith-based leaders on how to tackle drugs and social issues affecting students. Apart from this, awareness programme are also carried out in schools and communities. The intervention programme includes psychosocial support, counselling services and mentoring support and this ensured that proper professional guidance is provided to students' harm by drugs.