



RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTION
Tuesday, 18 August 2026

145/2026 - Hon. Premila Kumar to ask the Minister for Finance. Can the Minister update Parliament on the following:

- (a) the total number of complaints received, resolved, pending and dismissed by the Office of the Financial Services Ombudsman from 2024 to date, broken down by year and category of complaint;**
 - (b) the number of investigations initiated by the Office from 2024 to date and the outcomes of these investigations; and**
 - (c) the annual budget allocation, actual expenditure and the staff establishment of the Office from 2024 to date.**
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1. By way of background, the Reserve Bank of Fiji (**RBF**) has in place an established complaints management framework for addressing complaints relating to financial institutions under its supervision. This framework provides customers with avenues to raise concerns and ensures that complaints are appropriately considered and addressed.
2. The framework was established in January 2010 through the Complaints Management Policy for banks and licensed credit institutions. It was subsequently extended to insurance companies, FNPF and foreign exchange dealers, requiring them to establish

appropriate complaints management frameworks supported by internal governance structures, procedures and processes to address customer grievances effectively and efficiently.

3. Among other objectives, the policy seeks to ensure that:
 - i. Customers have confidence that their complaints will be treated with priority and fairness.
 - ii. Customers are able to obtain information regarding the status of their complaints at any stage of the process.
 - iii. Complaints are handled within reasonable and defined timeframes given the time-sensitive nature of financial disputes.
 - iv. Customers are able to lodge complaints through any branch or head office of the institution, with the institution obligated to facilitate such complaints.
4. Since its establishment, the RBF has managed unresolved complaints referred by licensed financial institutions through a dedicated complaints management function. The RBF has also received complaints directly from customers, as well as complaints referred by the Consumer Council of Fiji and the Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission.
5. In 2024, the RBF announced the establishment of the Office of the FSO following the 2024 National Budget Address. The purpose of the Office is to provide an impartial dispute-resolution platform to investigate, mediate and facilitate fair outcomes between consumers and financial service providers licensed and regulated by the Reserve Bank.

6. The establishment of the FSO was intended to strengthen consumer confidence in Fiji's financial system by providing customers with an independent mechanism to resolve disputes that cannot be satisfactorily resolved through the internal complaints processes of financial institutions.
7. It is important to note that the FSO currently operates primarily through mediation and conciliation. The Office relies largely on the authority and influence of the RBF as the regulator of licensed financial institutions (**LFIs**). In practice, this means that financial institutions cooperate with the dispute-resolution process within the context of their regulatory relationship with the RBF.
8. In almost all cases, customers first take their complaints directly to the relevant financial institution. All financial institutions have internal complaints-handling mechanisms and are expected to address customer concerns promptly and appropriately. Data on complaints received and addressed are provided to the RBF on a quarterly basis.

9. The following table provides the total number of complaints and its breakdown.

Total Number of Complaints Received by Industry										
	2026		2025				2024			
	Q2	Q1	Q4	Q3	Q2	Q1	Q4	Q3	Q2	Q1
Banks	708	618	574	619	1546	600	667	1124	1484	805
Credit Institutions	15	37	9	30	31	19	26	16	3	16
FNPF	29	54	14	31	23	47	26	28	14	20
Insurance	40	40	27	50	56	61	31	67	30	28
RFEDs & MCs	0	4	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total New Cases	792	753	626	730	1,657	727	750	1,235	1,531	869
Escalated to RBF	25	10	11	16	9	10	6	7	6	10

* RFED = Restricted Foreign Exchange Dealers; MCs = Money Changers

10. The data may be summarized as follows:
- A total of 9,670 complaints were received by all financial institutions between January 2024 and June 2026.
 - Commercial banks recorded the highest number of complaints, totaling 8,745, or approximately 90 percent of the total. Insurance companies recorded 430 complaints, followed by FNPF with 286 complaints.
 - While these numbers may appear high, they should be considered in the context of the tens of millions of financial transactions undertaken through financial institutions.
 - Importantly, only 110 complaints were escalated to the RBF during the period. This represents approximately 1 percent of the total complaints lodged with financial institutions, indicating that the vast majority of complaints - around 99 percent—were addressed through the institutions' internal complaints-management processes.

11. The following table provides a breakdown of complaints by category:

	2024 (Jan – Dec)	2025 (Jan – Dec)	2026 (Jan – Aug)
Banks	24	30	25
Credit Institutions	1	4	4
FNPF	0	0	0
Insurance	4	6	5
RFEDs & MCs	0	6	1
TOTAL	29	46	35

12. Complaints escalated to the RBF were predominantly related to commercial banks and insurance companies, with a smaller number relating to credit institutions.
13. For complaints escalated directly to the RBF for mediation in 2024 reflected a notable shift in consumer concerns over the course of the year. During the first half of the year, security and access issues dominated the complaints received, with most disputes relating to compromised account access, online fraud, mortgage terms, and account fees. However, this trend changed significantly in the second half of the year. Poor customer service emerged as the leading cause of escalation, largely driven by customers' frustration with banks' failure to respond to initial queries in a timely manner. In addition, the RBF mediated several motor vehicle insurance disputes during the latter part of the year, most of which were linked to delays in claims processing.
14. In 2025, complaints escalated to the RBF were overwhelmingly dominated by customer-service issues. The first quarter continued to record fraud and Visa card disputes, while the second quarter included disagreements relating to declined insurance claims. In the third and fourth quarters, communication breakdowns became the primary driver of escalations. By year-end, customers were seeking

RBF intervention because of delayed responses, overly complex industry terminology, and insufficient explanations of internal policies, procedures and decision-making processes.

15. In 2026, the most common complaints related to customer-service shortcomings, system challenges, inconsistent interpretation of policies, inadequate information from insurance providers and slow processing times. Poor communication between financial institutions and customers also remained a major source of dissatisfaction, with customer-service issues consistently ranking among the top three complaint areas. Scams and fraud-related matters also remained prominent, highlighting the continuing need for stronger financial literacy and public awareness.
16. The following table provide a summary of complaints received by RBF, those that have been resolved and those that have been carried forward on not resolved:

	2024 (Jan – Dec)	2025 (Jan – Dec)	2026 (Jan – Aug)
New Complaints Received	29	46	35
Carried forward from the previous year	1	1	8
Total Assessed	30	47	43
Resolved	29	39	35
Carried Forward	1	8	7

17. Of the 110 new complaints referred to the RBF since the beginning of 2024, 103 have been resolved, while 7 remain outstanding as at June 2026. The RBF team is continuing to work on the outstanding matters with the aim of reaching fair and amicable resolutions.
18. The RBF highlights complaints-management data at its quarterly meetings with the industry. In addition, the Governor includes

complaints management as an agenda item in his annual one-to-one meetings with the CEOs of financial institutions.

19. The FSO is headed by a qualified lawyer and supported by an analyst and an intern. Under the RBF's delegation of authority, the Ombudsman reports to the Chief Manager (Risk Management). Quarterly Complaints Management Reports are presented to the Policy Committee, chaired by the Governor.
20. In terms of the budget, the FSO's operational costs mainly comprise wages and salaries, staff benefits and associated overheads. The direct budget allocation for the FSO is approximately \$175,000. Including overhead costs such as office space, IT, accounts, human resources and utilities, the estimated total cost is approximately \$250,000.

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