

APPENDICES

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Written Responses



Fiji Police Force

Oral Submission to the Parliament Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs & Defence

1. Fiji Police Force Annual Report 2017-2018
2. Fiji Police Force Annual Report 2019-2020

*29 August 2020
Tuesday 0900hrs – 1100hrs
Parliament Big Committee, Room 2*

The Hon. Chair of the Parliament Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs & Defence, Hon. Viliame Naupoto, Committee representatives, ladies and gentlemen. My task this morning is to present the Fiji Police Force's response to queries and clarifications raised on our 2017-2018 and 2019-2020 Annual Reports on the following thematic items:

- a) Crime Statistics*
- b) Complaints on Service (CAS) and Complaints Against Police (CAP)*
- c) K9 Unit*
- d) Allowances*
- e) KPI*
- f) Police Process and Procedures*
- g) Exhibits*
- h) Community Policing*
- i) Succession Planning*
- j) Road Fatalities*
- k) Emergency Contacts*

Thematic Item 1: Crime Statistics

- 1. In your statistics on crime, at what stage of criminal investigation does a crime become a statistic, for example is it during the reporting phase, detection phase, investigation phase or prosecution phase?**

As soon as the crime is reported, it becomes statistics and is reflected in the Fiji Police Daily Crime Report (DCR) as trivial, civil, NCIL, or registered as a docket. Preliminary investigations, such as recording of statements, are carried out and the crime is registered in the Crime Register (CR). A number is then assigned for that specific case. The DCR is then sent to the Police Statistics Unit for data entry purposes, analysis and reporting, while the suspect is arrested and charged. When this happens, a case is said to have been detected. A crime therefore becomes a statistics during the reporting phase.

- 2. Unsolved Cases – How and when is a case designated unsolved? How long does it remain open?**

There is no time frame for any case. However, when the Investigating Officer updates his supervisor/superior on a case, and it is decided that there is inadequate/insufficient evidence, the case is filed.

- 3. Is animal cruelty part of the crime statistics?**

Based on the crime statistics collated by the Fiji Police Force for the years 2018 to 2022, there have been consistent cases of animal-related offences reported.

Injuring Animals

In the category of "Injuring Animals," the number of incidents fluctuated over these five years. In 2018, there were 40 reported cases of animals being injured. This number slightly decreased to 35 cases in 2019, followed by a slight increase to 34 cases in 2020. However, there was a notable spike in 2021, with 49 reported cases of injury to animals. The year 2022 registered a decrease of 23 reported cases.

Farm animals a) Theft

A concerning trend has emerged with regards to the theft of farm animals including cattle, livestock and dogs in the past five years. In 2018, there were 374 reported cases of theft of these animals, indicating a significant problem. This number increased to 428 cases in 2019, suggesting a growing concern. The year 2020 recorded a further escalation, with 503 cases reported. The subsequent year, 2021, saw an even more substantial rise, with 583 cases of animal theft reported. However, the year 2022 recorded a decrease in reported cases, with 406 cases of animal theft.

b) Unnatural Offences with Animals

This category involves unnatural activities by humans involving animals under the sexual offences section of the Crimes Act. Apart from farm animal thefts, there were two cases of "Unnatural Offences with Animals" in the past five years, one in 2021 and one in 2022.

4. What percentage of crime are "hate crimes"? Our understanding of hate crimes is "A crime, typically one involving violence that is motivated by prejudice on the basis of ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or similar grounds". A related offence is "Cyberbullying". How much of it is reported and investigated?

Simply put, a hate crime is a **crime against a person that is motivated by feelings of hatred for his or her race, religion, sexuality, or gender.**

In the realm of cyber-crime, the Online Safety Act of 2018 has played a pivotal role in addressing digital wrongdoings. One category of offences involves "Causing harm by posting electronic communication." In 2021, there were three cases reported where individuals caused harm through online communication. This decreased to two cases in 2022.

Another offence under this act is "Posting an intimate visual recording." In 2022, a single case was reported where individuals shared private visual content without consent. This highlights the need to safeguard privacy and dignity in the digital space.

Meanwhile, under the Miscellaneous Offences of the Crimes Act 2009, the issue of "Traffic in obscene publications" raises concern. This offence involves circulating explicit material online. The statistics revealed six cases in 2018, dropping to three in 2019, and three in 2020. The numbers declined to two cases in 2021 before a slight increase of three cases in 2022.

This data underscores the ongoing challenge of addressing such offences and maintaining a respectful online environment. It emphasises the importance of continued vigilance in upholding online decency and safeguarding individuals from harmful content.

Thematic Item 2: Complaints on Service (CAS) and Complaints Against Police (CAP)

5. In all the Annual Reports that we have scrutinized, we note an increase on Complaints against Service and Complaints against Police. What are the main reasons of the increase and what is being done about it?

As much as the FPF aspire for discipline and the good reputation of the organisation, there are always challenges that tarnish the image of the FPF.

There are always elements within that contribute to the increase in both CAS and CAP. Supervisors and the attitude of individual officers have a major role to play on this.

Amongst others, neglect of duty (NOD) and Conduct are commonly committed disciplinary offences contributing to CAS and CAP.

The analysis of data for the last three (3) years (2020 -2022) indicates that failure to attend to reports, failure to carry out initial action of complaints received, providing feedback, attitude and behaviour of officers and management of investigation processes and procedures are the main components of conduct and Neglect of Duty. The management of investigation includes failure to return court files to prosecution, failure to subpoena witnesses and missing exhibits.

It should also be noted that the spike in CAS & CAP may be due to the following:

- a) *Multiple counts of a single case.* There are cases that have multiple counts which accumulates overtime and add towards the total number of cases.
- b) *Duplicates in recording* – same complaint made at different centres
- c) *Overlap in CAS & CAP,* for instance, a complaint about a police officer who fails to appear for duty can be a case of both a CAS and a CAP. It violates the procedural and the civil duty that police must uphold.

The overall contributor is supervision. Managers need to strengthen their supervisory roles make rational decision and be tact in their leadership. Continuous training and professional development should be strengthened to improve our standards and ethics.

What is being done about it?

The data for the last six (6) months in comparison for the same period in 2022 is graphically illustrated below. The last four (4) months show a downward trend.



Below are some strategies that have been implemented to curb CAS and CAP within the FPF.

- a) **General awareness** at all levels by stations enlightening officers on discipline, CAS, CAP, service delivery, public perception, our attitude and professionalism. Furthermore, CAS & CAP statistics are shown for realisation and improvement.
- b) **The IA PHQ conducts its weekend proactive awareness visiting PS and CP in the SD, ED and CD.** The approach includes general awareness to all officers present, checking of records to ensure that they are in order, checking of prisoners in cells to ensure 48hrs detention period is not breached.
- c) On the same proactive approach, the **division management are notified on the identified breaches.**
- d) Minor complaints are rectified with PS and CM concerned immediately.
- e) On the reactive front, IA has established robust investigation teams in all divisions which is followed by tribunal proceedings.

6. **Bodycam.** A question on bodycam and vehicle mounted dashcam. Has the Police analyzed the use of bodycam and dashcam as a remedy towards police accountability which will in turn reduce complaints against Police?

Note: Royal Canadian Mountain Police are rolling out the use of bodycam with the following

- objectives:
- Strengthening transparency, accountability and public trust.
- Resolving public complaints more quickly.
- Improving interaction between the public and the police. Improving evidence gathering.

In some reports, there is a correlation between body cam and successful prosecution also.

Bodycam is a great initiative however, it will come with a cost. It can assist in:

- Strengthening transparency, accountability and public trust.
- Resolving public complaints more quickly.
- Improving interaction between the public and the police.
- Improving evidence gathering.

However, the operation and maintenance of a bodycam would be a major factor. The authenticity of the recording may be questionable too. The bodycam has special docking stations where it is battery charged and data is downloaded. Thereafter, it gets directly stored on a database. This is to avoid manipulation of data. (IT expert to carry out surveys to ensure sustainability).

Bodycam would mostly assist on a reactive approach to curb CAS and CAP; however, it may act as a deterrent to officers similar to cameras on mobile devices.

Thematic Item 3: K9 Unit

7. K9 – There is a report on the obituary section on Lucy (Ret K9). Given that K9 plays a big part in police investigative work and is also allocated a budget perhaps it should be also reported on in the 2019-2020 Annual Report?

The K9 Unit is instrumental in police operations. They assist police during drug operations, search and rescue, fugitive apprehension and public relations. When a K9 is injured or killed, they are treated with nearly as much reverence and respect as when a police officer suffers a similar fate.

On the case of Lucy (Ret K9) and for the purpose of reporting, the events for one Financial Year is captured in the same Financial Year's Annual Report. Though we appreciate and acknowledge a police dog's contribution, all the activities surrounding its existence will be reported only in the Financial Year the report was compiled and not carried forward to the next two years as was the question in this case.

Thematic Item 4: Allowances

8. What type of allowances do you have for your specialists apart from Dog Handler Allowances?

Apart from the Dog Handlers Allowances, the FPF remunerates for other specialist allowances below:

- a) Plain Clothes Allowance for CID and Special Branch
- b) Criminal Investigations Allowance
- c) Special Branch Allowance
- d) Prosecution Allowance

Thematic Item 5: KPI

9. KPI on reducing crime against women – given most cases are domestic violence related, how does/how can Police help reduce. A suggestion - that successful prosecution is a better and doable KPI for Police?

Most of the crimes against women (females from the age of 18 years and above) are assault related and the most prevalent assault is Assault Causing Actual Bodily Harm (ACABH). These assaults do not always take place in domestic settings but can happen anywhere, during social gatherings away from the home, during sports, in nightclubs etc.

The FPF has been in close collaboration with relevant key stakeholders in addressing crime against women. The following initiatives and programmes are what the FPF has been engaged in regarding the issue:

- i. strongly advocating and strengthening the relevant legislation and the current provisions in the (i) Domestic Violence Act 2009; (ii) Police internal GBV Policy; (iii) Police internal No Drop Policy; (iv) Fiji Police internal DVRO Application & Enforcement SOP
- ii. Reducing Violence against Women by 10% as one of our KPIs
- iii. Strengthening the Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection (MoWCSP) on tackling issues of ending violence against women and children

- iv. Identifying HOT SPOTS to target awareness and recognising settlements/villages as Violence Free communities
- v. Reinvigorating the DUAVATA Community Policing concept through community policing activities through village visitations, school visitations, awareness programmes, tikina meetings, victim support
- vi. Initiating the Formation of Mothers Club
- vii. Strengthening partnership with stakeholders and close collaboration with other relevant Ministries such as Ministry of Women, Health, Social Welfare, Education, Justice Department, NGOs, Women's Groups, Faith Based Organisations, CSOs, Villages & Tikinas
- viii. Increase in media awareness (e.g. Crime Stoppers, Talk back shows, brochures, Newspaper publications, media releases).
- ix. Strengthening investigation capabilities
- x. Smart Visibility Patrols on Hotspots/Red Zones
- xi. Enhancing capacity building training and programmes on ending violence against women

On the suggestion to have successful prosecution as a KPI, Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Fiji Police Force has an existing KPI, "Maintaining Successful Prosecution Rate above 90%".

Thematic Item 6: Police Process and Procedures

10. What are the procedures for traffic stops?

Traffic stops depends on the situation at hand. The FPF conducts normal routine operations and snap check mostly on weekends from Thursdays until Sunday. Vehicles are stopped as a result of speeding, suspected drunk and drive offences, Breathlyser tests, prison escapees, suspected vehicles transporting drugs or carrying persons of interests, national events etc.

Drivers are usually greeted and are advised to park by the side of the road. The purpose of their being stopped by police officers are usually relayed to them. For speeding purposes, divers are always served a Traffic Infringement Notice. If drugs or suspected items are found in the vehicles, the drivers are escorted to the nearest police station and items are seized for further procedures.

11. What are the procedures for random search?

Procedures for vehicular searches

- a) Vehicles are picked at random
- b) Drivers park on the side of the road
- c) The purpose of vehicular search is relayed to the driver
- d) Driver's license and driving documents are sighted
- e) Police Officers will show their search warrant if not in uniform
- f) Police officer searches the vehicle and persons

- g) The police officer will ask for your: name and address, date of birth, ethnicity etc. if you are reported for an offence
- h) Vehicles and items are seized if it is believed that an offence or law has been breached. Drivers are taken in for further questioning.

Thematic Item 7: Exhibits

12. There are no reports on exhibits in both Annual Reports. The Committee would like to have discussions on the issue to clarify:

a. What are exhibits?

Exhibits are simply items kept in police custody in the course of police work. It ranges from lost and found properties to properties seized in the course of investigation. Exhibits which will be required, or is likely to be required, as evidence in subsequent court proceedings or any other judicial proceedings or to further Police investigation. An example of an exhibit would be a knife which may connect a person in a murder case

An exhibit, in a criminal prosecution or a civil trial, is a physical or documentary evidence brought before the assessors. The artifact or document itself is presented for the jury's inspection. Examples of exhibits may include a weapon allegedly used in the crime, marijuana sachets, a photograph, or a video recording.

b. Safekeeping and destruction of exhibits

Safekeeping of all exhibits are done at the stations with proper processes and procedures (recording systems) in place. Disposal of exhibits are done in accordance with the law. This includes all types of exhibits ranging from: illicit drugs; exhibits where the owner is known and there is no offence committed; exhibits where the ownership is disputed; exhibits pending in Court; exhibits that are perishable in nature; exhibits that are deemed to be proceeds of crime; etc. the bottom line is, **there is a lawful way in the disposal of exhibits.**

Therefore FSO 203 outlines the process of care and custody of police exhibits and FSO 103 outlines the Accountability of the exhibits in terms of records in registers, movements /disposals and periodical inspections. Also FSO 217 outlines the process of handing confiscated Liquor as Exhibits.

No exhibit are disposed-off during the period of any pending appeal granted by the Court; unless an order of such Court directs otherwise and following are the legislative provisions that are relied upon for disposal or destruction as per the circumstances ;

- a) **Disposal of Exhibits In Undetected Cases** - Magistrate's Court for grant of disposal orders under section 159 of the Criminal Procedure Act, 2009.
- b) **Disposal of Unclaimed or Lost and Found Property**- procedures prescribed by FSO No. 104 (Register of Lost And Found Property).
- c) **Drugs**- disposal of illicit drug and controlled equipment exhibit under section 30 of the Illicit Drugs Control Act 2004.
- d) **Monetary article / Currency and Disposal of Perishable, Dangerous or Hazardous Items** - restoration or disposal for such articles to any Magistrate under Section 101 (3) of the Criminal Procedure Act 2009.

- e) **Disposal of Motor Vehicles, Trailers and Parts-** notify LTA in writing of all such motor vehicles and trailers and seek the LTA's assistance in disposing off such motor vehicle and trailers as prescribed by section 74 of the Land Transport Act, 1998.

Exhibits and other items seized are stored in the Exhibit rooms

c. Understanding reports on missing exhibits

When there is a report of missing exhibits, investigations are carried out. In the past, officers have been charged for stealing exhibits – Theft (section 291 of Crimes Act); or destroying evidence (section 189 of Crimes Act).

FSO 203 outlines the process of care and custody of police exhibits and FSO 103 outlines the Accountability of the exhibits in terms of records in registers, movements /disposals and periodical inspections. FSO 217 outlines the process of handing confiscated liquor as exhibits.

Thematic Item 8: Community Policing

13. Give us an understanding of the strategies of community policing, what is the status now and how effective it is?

Community policing is an integrated approach of proactively preventing crimes through the partnership of respective stakeholders by taking ownership of the safety and security of their communities.

The Fiji Police Force through consultation and reviews over time has developed a key instrument of community policing which is our very own DUAVATA Framework. The approach is conceptualized on the ADRI model, an apparatus within the framework for operationalization through community engagement. The ADRI Model involves the planning phase (**A**pproach), the implementation phase (**D**evelopment), the **R**esults phase is the outcomes, while **I**mprovements (review) phase is the feedback mechanism through monitoring and evaluation to better the workings of the framework.

The DUAVATA approach of community policing in Fiji requires collaborative effort from all stakeholders to work together as a 'whole of population' approach in the successful implementation of programmes and activities to build bridges within our communities and to prevent crime.

Three symposiums were held in 2021 with internal and external stakeholders on the theme "Partnership and Empowerment: Community Policing in action". This is to revamp the concept of community policing.

Now we have the following:

- a) 84 community posts;
- b) National Crime Prevention Board
- c) Divisional Managers Community Policing (DMCPs) in the divisions
- d) Community policing officers in the divisions implementing community policing programmes in villages, schools, settlements and communities

- e) The FPF, in collaboration with civil societies, faith based organisations, NGOs, businesses and individuals are working together to proactively address crimes in the community. This is done through facilitating capacity building programmes for police officers, Talanoa and meeting with village and community heads, community awareness and visitations to business and corporate bodies.
- f) FPF Organised Programmes such as the Crime Stoppers Fiji Scholastic Programme, Blue Light EDGE Programme, Edutainment Programme, Training of Trainers and Spiritual Programmes.

How much effort is directed towards community policing?

The DUAVATA approach works through five pillars of community policing, i.e., policing through sports, music, religion, vanua and art. These pillars are tools for infiltration into communities, schools, settlements, villages, business houses, faith based programmes, sporting bodies, etc. A lot of effort is directed towards community policing since it is the backbone of crime prevention in Fiji.

What are the new police community strategies being adopted?

- a) Establishing the DUAVATA Working Groups
- b) Initiate DUAVATA Framework Awareness Programmes
- c) Pursue Police Oriented Community Policing Projects
- d) Promote Crime Prevention through Environmental design
- e) Engage Stakeholders on GBV capacity building programs
- f) Developing relevant awareness packages on emerging threats
- g) Promoting Wellness and Fitness Programs
- h) Pursue Green Policing Initiative
- i) Strengthen Ethical Driven Programmes
- j) Initiate Human Right Compliance Programmes
- k) Initiating sharing of relevant Information at all levels
- l) Strengthen Organizational Safety Practices

Thematic Item 9: Succession Planning

14. Does FPF have a succession plan? Please explain.

Yes, the FPF has a Succession Plan as summarised below. The framework below outlines how the plan is operationalised.

1. Skills setting

- Analysis of data via: FRO, FPA Data, PF & SR
- Cluster officers into their skill set (field of specialty & qualification)
- Cadet Entry
- Toppers

2. Career Pathing

- Identify an officer to a specific policing stream or officers to specific policing streams and provide relevant training and workshop

3. Officers Professional Effectiveness

- Monitor the performance of officers via:
 - a) ACR & Staff Reports
 - b) CAP & CAP Data
 - c) Crime Data (ACP)

4. Succession Planning

- a) Identify post and post holders
- b) Scope all eligible candidates based on MQR
- c) Vett potential candidates (10 attributes)
- d) Short list by colour coding
 - a. Green – over 65%
 - b. Amber – 50%-64%
 - c. Red – Below 49%

5. Cluster by Field of speciality

6. Command Group

7. Commissioner of Police

Thematic Item 10: Road Fatalities

15. What strategies have been implemented to address road fatalities?

The FPF has been allocated \$5K for road safety awareness in the 2023-2024 Financial Year.

Briefly, as of 23 August 2023, the current road fatality lies at 60 compared to 23 in the same period last year. The total fatality last year was 44. The FPF has revamped its traffic operation and also has started the Joint Operation with LTA and continues to conduct stop checks, Radar Operations, Breathlyser Operations and Media Awareness to address the issue.

Some strategies implemented by the FPF to address road fatalities are discussed below:

a) Use of Speed Detection Devices

Speeding is one of the major causes of road fatality in Fiji. To address fatality caused by speeding, the Fiji Police Force, through our highway patrol cars are currently using speed detectors on our roads. There are eighteen (18) Hand-Held Laser Speed Detector Machines currently being used by the FPF.

b) Use of Breathalyzer Instrument [as per Breath Test and Analysis Regulation 2000- LTA Act 35 of 1998]

From January 2023 until July 2023, there were a total of 365 drivers arrested for being drunk and driving compared to 439 in the same period last year. The total number of drivers arrested last year was 1,203 drivers.

To reduce this possibility, police officers are currently using the Road side device - AlcoTest 5820 and Evidential Instruments Namely Dragger 7110 and 9510. The device accurately measures the breath alcohol level and translates it to blood alcohol level.

c) Promoting Traffic Safety and Awareness

Regular public awareness campaigns are conducted through various mediums, including social media, television, radio, and community events. Emphasising the importance of seat belt usage, pedestrian safety, and the dangers of distracted driving are usually conveyed through awareness programmes. Also, the Fiji Police Media Unit continues to create awareness on media outlets, including social media. Traffic Officers and Community Policing Officers are also conducting awareness to schools and communities.

d) Stakeholders Partnership

The FPF Police is working with key stakeholders, including the LTA, to combat the recent fatality spike on our roads. This is done through combined operations.

Thematic Item 11: Emergency Contacts

16. Who mans 911, 917 and 919 and how efficient is the response?

There are currently two police emergency lines 917 and 919, available on a 24/7 basis for any member of the public to call at the National Call Centre at the National Police Command Centre in Totogo. The overall command of these lines are under the jurisdiction of the ACP Operations.

The police emergency line 917 is an information line. This line does not necessarily accommodate tips or calls that are criminal in nature or crime related. This line is basically for any general information which members of the public may seek advice from regarding police services or procedures, referrals or alternative avenues to resolve problems etc.

The police emergency line 919 is meant for any crime related information or any emergency that requires police attention. This line is dedicated to receiving calls through phones (landline and any mobile network) from the general public regarding criminal element which are suspicious in nature ranging from events, behaviour, individual, groups, platforms, networks etc. observed in the home, neighbourhood or a public space which is a threat to life and property, peace of the family and community or threat to national security.

The response to 917 & 919 depends on whether the report is an emergency or informant call. Usually, reports that warrant immediate attention such as domestic violence and burglary will be attended to by any police unit nearby and available at the quickest available time. Informant calls are those that require police surveillance and investigation such as the whereabouts of wanted persons or drug dealers. This will be attended to by police officers but not as immediate as emergency reports.

<<< *Ends* >>>



A. Parliament request for Information on the National Crime Prevention Board & Crime Stoppers Board

B. National Crime Prevention Board

What is its purpose/functions?

Is it still effective to date, what are the remits?

B. Crime Stoppers Board

<i>Vision</i>	A well trained, motivated and highly responsive divisions that continually improve on its capacity in community partnership, crime intelligence and information sharing to ensure a safer Fiji for all.
<i>Mission</i>	Provide quality and conducive crime intelligence and information sharing service environment in partnership with the community to create a safer Fiji for all.
<i>Vision Statement</i>	To help stop, solve and prevent crime.

Objectives

1. Promote and provide an efficient system of crime information and intelligence sharing with all levels of the community.
2. Enhance customer satisfaction and confidence through ensuring prompt service deliveries.
3. Know the importance of '919' information line and differentiate information from reports.
4. Continually adhere to the Fiji Police and Crime Stoppers International Policies, bylaw and concepts.

What is its purpose/functions?

Crime Stoppers was established in Albuquerque in New Mexico and the concept was brought to Fiji by the late Mr. James Dutta. He presented to the late Commissioner of Police, Mr. Isikia Savua and the command group at that time and the concept was approved. Crime Stoppers is funded by the National Crime Stoppers Board and is coordinated and facilitated by the Fiji Police Force.

Crime Stoppers was first established in Fiji on July 20th 1997 with the responsibility of gathering information through the FPF's toll free line '919'. The Fiji Police is committed to receiving calls on a 24/7, 365-day service by dedicated phone line officers and civilian staff, with a 100% guarantee of anonymity.

The main role and functions of Crime Stoppers is to provide citizens with an opportunity to anonymously supply the Fiji Police Force with information about a crime or potential crime of which they have knowledge about. Information received is analysed and disseminated to DPCs who then advises a task force to attend to the reports received, follow up and receive feedbacks as soon as possible.

Informers will be rewarded cash by the National Crime Stoppers Board if the information they provide leads to an arrest.

Process & Procedures of Receiving Information through '919'line

- Information Received
- Filled in the information register
- Information sheet filled
- Analyse and Disseminate
- Awaiting of Progress
- Successful information to be rewarded
- Tabled in National Board meeting for Approval.

The National Crime Stoppers Board comprises business stakeholders who are dedicated and committed in the fight against crime. They are based in the five respective policing divisions. The overwhelming support from the Board of Directors of Crime Stoppers has really been a boost towards the manning of divisional Crime Stoppers Unit in terms of the Scholastic Programmes, Television Programmes on all three TV channels, Fiji Sun Publication, Vodafone texting platforms and reward payment. This has really advanced people's confidence to call 919 to pass on information to the FPF.

Is it still effective to date, what are the remits?

Certainly, the National Crime Stoppers Board is very effective as the public are very confident to call 919 and disseminate information on crime. Major criminal cases have been solved, persons of interest on drug cases and wanted lists have been identified and apprehended. Similarly, the Scholastic Programme in schools have been bolstered whereby the FPF, teachers and students are working together to instill discipline among students, promote the importance of assisting and caring for others and educate them to become responsible, law-abiding citizens. The Fiji Media Association also works very closely with the FPF in this regard.

Verbatim Report

[VERBATIM REPORT]

ON THE

MEETING OF THE SELECT

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

AND DEFENCE

ANNUAL REPORTS

- 1. Ministry of Defence, National Security and Policing 2018-2019 Annual Report**
- 2. Fiji Police Force 2017-2018 Annual Report**
- 3. Fiji Police Force 2019-2020 Annual Report**

**INSTITUTIONS: (1) Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration
(2) Fiji Police Force**

**VENUE: Big Committee Room, Parliament Precincts,
Government Buildings, Suva.**

DATE: Tuesday, 29th August, 2023

VERBATIM REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE HELD IN THE BIG COMMITTEE ROOM (EAST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, ON TUESDAY, 29TH AUGUST, 2023 AT 8.59 A.M.

Interviewee/ Submitter: Fiji Police Force and Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration

In Attendance :

Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. | Mr. Mason Smith | - | Permanent Secretary |
| 2. | Ms. Alesi Dau | - | Manager Defence |
| 3. | Mr. Save Raiwalui | - | Director Corporate Services |
| 4. | Mr. George Washington Dumukoro | - | Director Policy |

Fiji Police Force

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------|---|--|
| 1. | Mr. Aporosa Lutunauga | - | Assistant Commissioner of Police |
| 2. | Mr. Mitieli Divuana | - | Director Traffic |
| 3. | Mr. Mesake Waqa | - | Director Planning, Policy and Research and Development |
| 4. | Mr. Manueli Yawayawa | - | Officer in Charge K-9 Unit |
| 5. | Mr. Koresi Davui | - | Director Planning |
| 6. | Ms. Pauline Rasila | - | Senior Research Officer |

MR. CHAIRMAN. - Honourable Members, ladies and gentlemen from the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration and the Fiji Police Force, members of the public, the Secretariat; a very good morning to you all. It is a pleasure to welcome everyone, especially the viewers who are watching this proceeding.

This is a meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence. For information purpose, pursuant to Standing Order 111 of Parliament, all Committee meetings are to be open to the public. Therefore, please note that this meeting is open to the public and the media and is also being streamed live on the Parliament website and social media online platforms and the Parliament Channel on the Walesi platform.

For any sensitive information concerning the matter before us this morning that cannot be disclosed in public, this can be provided to the Committee either in private or in writing. Please, be advised that pursuant to Standing Order 111(2), there are only few specific circumstances that allow for non-disclosure, and this include:

1. National Security matters;
2. Third party confidential information;
3. Personnel or human resources matters; and
4. Committee deliberation and development of Committee's recommendation and report.

I wish to remind honourable Members and our guests that all questions are to be addressed through the Chairman. For those viewers watching this live on *Facebook*, questions can be directed on the comments section and only relevant questions will be taken into consideration. This is a parliamentary meeting and all information gathered is covered under the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act. So, please, bear in mind we do not condone slander or liable of any sort and any information brought before this Committee should be based on facts.

In terms of the protocols of this Committee meeting, please, minimise the usage of mobile phones and all mobile phones are to be on silent mode while the meeting is in progress.

(Introduction of Members of the Standing Committee, the Secretariat and Hansard)

Today, the Committee will be hearing a joint submission from the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration and the Fiji Police Force on the three Reports that are before the Committee, the:

1. Ministry of Defence National Security and Policing 2018 and 2019 Annual Reports;
2. Fiji Police Force 2017-2018 Annual Report; and
3. Fiji Police Force 2019-2020 Annual Report.

We note that the Fiji Police Force 2018-2010 Annual Report has been tabled in Parliament, and I suspected that we will be debating it in the next Parliament sitting.

Ladies and gentlemen, honourable Members, before us this morning we have the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration and the Fiji Police Force. I request the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs and Immigration to introduce his team and also if the Fiji Police Force can introduce themselves. Thank you.

(Introduction of Officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration and the Fiji Police Force)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Again, welcome to this morning's discussions on the Annual Reports. We had sent some possible talking points that we want to discuss this morning. We will start off with the Fiji Police Force and the first set of questions on crime statistics.

A big part of your Annual Report is on your statistics and statistics on crime in general. We are wondering that the statistics you have in here, at what stage of criminal investigation does that crime become a statistics? Is it during the reporting stage or whether it is during the investigation stage. Can you just elaborate on that?.

This is a free *talanoa* session. Members of the public are also listening and this is also an opportunity for them to hear from you issues and honourable Members of the Committee might find some supplementary questions that they will also ask as a back and forth *talanoa* session.

MR. M. DIVUANA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To respond to that question, Sir, when a case is being reported, preliminary investigations are conducted and officers at the frontline make decisions on when and where investigations are to be done. It becomes a crime statistics of the Fiji Police Force when it is registered in a crime register or as a Uniform Branch (UB) Investigation or if we cannot identify the threshold of any offence committed, we register it as a Police inquiry paper. So, it becomes part of the crime statistics once investigations are conducted whereby a crime has been registered and an offence has been determined to be committed by a perpetrator.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- When I look at the two Annual Reports that you have, your statistics on this one, the number of crimes that were committed and you also have statistics on the other ones. Is there a carry forward from these statistics that you have on this one?

Therefore, I ask the question on unsolved cases. If you have crime that were committed during this reporting period, say 1,300 is reported and the following year, 80 that have not been solved are still under investigation, is that carry forward to be included in the following year's annual report?

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Mr. Chairman, just to elaborate on crime statistics as has been explained by Director Traffic, I get the point where you are coming from. Currently, the Fiji Police registers crime in this current year and when it is being detected, it is added on to the detection rate of the year that it was detected. It then becomes a detection rate.

Obviously, at the frontline, once a report has been lodged, the first thing we need to do is to do a preliminary investigation to determine the status of that report. It is still a report, so after the preliminary investigation, we decide whether it is a trivial investigation report, which means trivial in nature and investigation is refused, that is one part of the statistics, and another one if it is a police inquiry paper. Once we have established that a criminal offence has been committed, then it is registered in the Criminal Register (CR) and that is what appears on CR.

We have our current statistics annual report too but, unfortunately, it was not tabled in this Annual Report. We hope that if you need that, we can also table that. It is published every year and that is why other reports and other statistics are not reflected there, especially the trivial cases, the no case in law cases and cases of civil nature are not reflected in the CR because CR is only for criminal registered cases. When we are talking about crime statistics in this context, it is only criminal registered cases.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Can we have a follow up on unsolved cases, how long do the cases remain open if they are unsolved?

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- To answer that question, Mr. Chairman, there are no time limitations in regards to unsolved cases. It solely depends on the supervisors when they see that all avenues of investigations are done and there is no further lead to lead the investigation, instructions are normally given for the

file to be closed as no lead or insufficient evidence to lead an investigation. There is no time imitation, but when the cases are filed, it can be reopened once fresh evidence surfaces to lead the investigation.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- For those who are lost, for example, I know that this is the correct term - presumed dead, in a sense. How long is this case open until you can say, "Alright, this is presumed". I remember when I was in the Navy, when we do search and rescue cases and there are still missing people, people wanted to claim insurance. So, how long is that one?

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Mr. Chairman, that is seven years by law.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Again, honourable Members, if there are any questions, please, just jump in.

I will continue this questioning along the crime statistics. On animal cruelty, if someone reports a crime about animal cruelty, is that part of that statistics that you have here?

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Mr. Chairman, in our reporting, we have categories of offences. Cruelty to animals is also part of the crime statistics on injuring of animals. In 2018, we reported about 40 cases.

Similarly, if there is also a case on theft of animals. We also had reports on that in 2017 and 2018. On unnatural offences with animals, that is also being reported for the past five years from 2021 to 2022 and from 2017 and 2018.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- One of the reasons why this is coming up is that, I received a complaint from a lady in Vuya. She alleged that her dog was killed. She sent me photos complaining about how slow the investigation into the death of the dog is. I have seen her emails and she was in contact with some of your officers. Animal cruelty is not part of these numbers that we see here, for those who report those type of crimes, am I correct?

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Yes, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- It will be in your annual statistics that you are talking about where those ones are recorded in.

MR. M. DIVUANA.- Mr. Chairman, if I may add, these were the reports in 2018 and 2019 but as of now, the Fiji Police Force has reviewed its reporting mechanism. Now, we have developed the Fiji Police Daily Incident Report and that involves all cases, whether it is civil in nature and that will be out soon by the end of this year.

Starting from this year moving forward, we are going to report on all the cases irrespective of whether it is criminal in nature or civil cases, so that we have a realistic outlook on what the real situation of

crime is in Fiji. That is the new template that we have developed and we have moved our reporting structure from the old Penal Code to the new Crimes Act, because there are different categories of offences and that is what the Fiji Police is now. We are talking about a report from 2018, but as far as we progress forward, we have developed and approved that and we are in the process of implementing it. By our next Annual Report, all these will be cleared out.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I will move to an area that is prevalent now and those are hate crimes and you would understand that. I think we have had a bit of discussion on that when we were talking about the Budapest Convention.

Social media is the platform for hate crimes. I think it easily manifests into violence later on. The fact that we have this vehicle of social media internet, what do you see when it comes to statistics as to how much of hate crime is happening - cyber bullying, for example? Are they being reported frequently? Can we have some discussions on those issues?

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Yes, Mr. Chairman. For the previous years, according to our crime statistics, I think 2017 to 2018 and 2020 to 2021, not much is recorded in the crime reports. However, there are reports that are registered at police stations and at the CR Headquarters in this regard.

Just to highlight on the challenges, when these cases of hate crimes are reported, sometimes our investigations come between the thin line of freedom of speech and a criminal offence being committed. In 2018, we had the Online Safety Act which was enacted which we are currently using to deal with hate crimes. However, there has to be a threshold whereby posts are being repeated, the acts are done deliberately by a person and whether electronic was anonymous, electronic communication was repeated and the extent of circulation. Those are some of the threshold which need to be met through investigations in order to become hate crimes.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- On cyberbullying, are there lots of reports or complaints on cyberbullying, or is it something that is just talked about on the social media? Do they come to out to the police to report?

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA .- Yes, Mr. Chairman, it had been reported and they have lots of cases, but there are only few cases that were prosecuted because of the nature of the offence as described by Director Planning. It continues to be challenge prior to 2013. There was no offence. It was under the Malicious Act, but now it is under the Online Safety Act. The statistics will start coming in now as we move forward and we are improving on the framework of those reports, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I hope that those who are listening and those who are facing cyberbullying will not be deterred and they still can come up to the Police and report if this is happening to them, so I just wish to make that point.

The next set of questions is on Complaints Against Services (CAS) and Complaints Against Police (CAP) that are prominent in the two Annual Reports. We noticed that in both the Reports, there was an increase in CAS and CAP and I am requesting if you can just enlighten us more on what kind of complaints become a CAS and what kind of complaint is a CAP? Just some general discussions on those issues, please.

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Sir, as you know, we are deliberating on the 2017 to 2018 Report. The Fiji Police Force began their reform and restructure in 2015 and the laws changed in 2009 from Penal Code to the Crimes Act, so that is some of the areas in which it has affected the way we deliver our services as we transit along these changes. It has improved.

Most of the complaints against Police was about services, the late in the attendance of reports because of the lack of mobility we had back then but we were happy that the Government has provided us now with the mobility and we have improved in the following years prior to 2017-2018 and as far as CAS and CAP in regards to the attendance of reports. We still have some emerging issues on that now, we have vehicles but sometimes it is the attitude of police officers on the frontline. However, I would like to assure that we have training phases in place to address those issues.

Another issue as far as complaints against Police are concerned are feedbacks where police officers do not provide timely feedback or the status of an investigation. The Police Force is currently facing that challenge and we are addressing it as the years go by as far as capacity building is concerned. We have looked at our systems and processes and we have new frameworks in place, systems and procedures.

We have our video interview. These are things that prevent Police complaints, again, in the process of ensuring the maintenance of law and order in the country. So, we acknowledge that there was an increase during those years but those are some of the contributing factors that contribute to the increase of complaints against Police as the organisation was going through the transition of change.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- This brings in this question of body cameras, this is just me and my research reading into other police jurisdictions and finding out how they deal with complaints against their services and their issues on accountability, et cetera, and I came across body camera on how other Police Forces are using body camera. The reports that I read are mostly that body camera helps in Police accountability in their interaction with the public.

I think in one of the reports that I read, there is a correlation between successful prosecution and the use of body camera, given the evidence it captures. What are your views on the use of body camera in the Fiji Police? Have you trialed it out or are you thinking of introducing it, et cetera?

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Mr. Chairman, body camera is almost part of police planning process. It is included in our 50 Year Plan in the Fiji Police Force ,as you know that we have a strategic roadmap. Body camera is part of the second decade of planning and that is the year that we are currently moving on, this decade that we are living in.

Currently, we are using body camera in the Fiji Police, it has been used by our Search and Rescue. When our Police Mobile Forces go out for search and rescue, their actions are recorded. It is also used by our CID Officers, they clip it on when they reconstruct the scene of the crime but it is only at a minimal number. However, in our planning process, we are hoping that given the budgetary provision by the Government, we would like to go down that path and have every officer from Traffic Uniform Branch to have that so that it could assist, having that on complaints against police and complaints against their service.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- On the same note, body cameras are vehicle cameras, as well as desk cameras. Do you have them installed in vehicles or not?

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- No, not in vehicles but we have body camera but only a small number. Right now, it is only given to PMF and our CID Officers when they reconstruct serious scenes of crime. But as I have stated, we are hoping for the Government provision so that we are able to purchase it to assist us in our work.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Just for your information, I have a desk camera installed on my vehicle and it is amazing what I capture in there. I captured a vehicle that was just reversing, bumped into a car and ran away and I could pick up the vehicle registration number, et cetera. I hope we can help you. I hope that this discussion and debate we will have on your Annual Report will result in you getting this tool that will help you cut down on this and also help you in your work.

The next set of questions for the Police is on our good friend, our K-9s and the Unit.

Hopefully, we will visit the Unit later. I noticed in one of the Reports, I think I saw there, that K-9 Lusi retired and passed on. It was in the list of the deceased, those that passed on in that year. But I was just wondering, "Alright, fine, you have Lusi that is reported deceased", but in your Annual Report, you will have your HR. the number of people, et cetera, but there is none on K-9.

On the number of K-9s that you have and the plans that you have for them in the future, given they play a big role in Police work, I was just wondering and maybe asking that in your next Annual Report, that we have a better understanding of your K-9 Unit, given that they are budgeted heavily also.

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- We acknowledge that the report was not there for K-9 and we had included it in the following year, however, the work that has been done by the K-9 is reflected in our detection cases. A certain percentage of our cases was being detected by dogs, especially when you talk about drugs, escapees, et cetera, and we acknowledge that it was not reflected in the 2017-2018 Annual Report. However, we assure the Committee that it is now being captured every year and that is the total value.

For the Police dog, there are police officers who do recruitment training. They have their own passout, they also have their funeral if they passed on. So, it is a solemn ceremony because of the fact that they assist us in our work - they do what a hundred men can do, a one single dog can do. For the status of our K-9, I will request our Officer in Charge K-9 to brief the Committee on what is their status now in Fiji.

MR. M. YAWAYAWA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, our Operation dogs here in Suva covering the South-Eastern Division - two are in Taveuni and six in the Western Division. For the patrol dogs, we have five police drug dogs - two in Nadi and three in Suva.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- As I have said, I hope the Committee can come in and visit your K-9 Unit.

We will move on to the next set of questions which is on allowances. I read in your budget that you have K-9 Handlers allowance, I think. Do you have allowances for your other specialised areas?

I was thinking about those who go out and handle crime scenes where you have bodies that have decayed, et cetera. Do you have other specialist allowances with the Police?

MR. M. YAWAYAWA.- Mr. Chairman, apart from the allowances, we have for CID allowance, extra duty allowance and all those but as for specialised units, the Strategic Planning Division has currently drawn up a paper and has been submitted to our Commissioner of Police. It includes Band allowance for our Band Officers because of the nature of music and some of them seemed to have been affected by the performance of blowing those trumpets and hearing the loud music. We have seagoing allowance for water police, as well as diving allowance for our divers.

We also have rural and maritime remote stations allowance that is also included in that paper and special operations allowance. This is specifically for drug operations and those crime scenes, in the case of national interest murder where people go in, they need to be compensated, specifically for drug operations where they carry marijuana from the fields. It also affects them. When they come back for testing, they are tested positive for cannabis just by handling those drugs. So, those are the risks that we are thinking and we are hoping for Government support on that to provide the allowance for the Police Officers in the field.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- So, the only allowance you have right now is the Dog Handlers Allowance?

MR. M. YAWAYAWA.- For special operations for specialised persons, that is the only one. For our Forensic, we do not have it and that is all included in this paper, the one that we are going to submit and we seek your support.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I hope that we can provide that support. I think honourable Qereqeretabua has mentioned something.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Yes, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask the Police Force about mental health counselling, especially when you are retrieving bodies, et cetera. What kind of mental health counselling is been offered to your officers currently?

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- We have our Psychologist and he is providing his services. In our reforming structure, we are going to develop that Unit but currently, he is going around the country right now and addressing those issues that have been raised by the honourable Member.

Yes, Madam, we just have only one. They have now been allocated a building and now we are looking at beefing up that Unit with the manpower required and then, again, it is part of our reform and restructure that has been approved.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I can see the Permanent Secretary scratching his head. Thank you for those points made so far.

I will move on to some Police process and procedures. This is from experience for me. People have also asked me about this if I can raise it, on your procedures when you do traffic stops. When you stop a vehicle, what can you do, what are the rights of those people that you have stopped?

I have had traffic stops and I will tell you that some of them are quite nice but some are very rude when they interact with us. Can you just, please, enlighten us on the procedures and the rights of those whom you are stopping? Perhaps, a follow on from that is the random checks that you do on people or if you meet someone that you want to face and check, what are their rights and what are the circumstances that will allow you to just stop someone who is walking down the road and say, "Hey, stop, I want to check what you have, if you like"? Again, that second part is also from someone who went through this random check. Sir, can you, please, enlighten us on those?

MR. M. DIVUANA.- The powers of the Police are stipulated in section 73 of the LTA Act. It stipulates most of the powers of controlling traffic and stopping of traffic for issuing of infringement notices on public places and streets. It also gives us the power to stop pedestrians who are on public street. Also on the procedures, the vehicles are picked on traffic operations. Drivers who are parked on the side of the road, we create a stop or a check bay.

The purpose of vehicle search is related to the drivers when they are stopped. Driving licence and driving documents are sighted. The Police Officers will show them the reason. If they are not in uniform, they will show their ID cards and officers have the power under that Act and also under section 15 of the Criminal Procedure Act 2009 to search the vehicle there and then. Police Officers will also ask for their name, address and other particulars of the driver, if you are reported for an offence.

Vehicles and items are seized to be believed that when an offence of law has been breached, drivers are then being taken for further questioning at Police Stations. If they breach a traffic law, then they are booked right there and then. If they are found drunk, they will go through the breathalyser procedure that is laid out in the Act to be taken to Police Stations.

In addition to that, that authority does not take away the customer service of a Police Officer but it has to be served in a decent and a well-mannered way. But, sometimes, when it comes to situations whereby they have drunken drivers or rugged drivers, as I have said, that authority does not take away that Police Officers must serve with humility and serve the public as well.

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Sir, on that issue that Director Traffic is talking about on the powers, every Police Officer has been taught on the procedure of traffic stop and the sequence of offences or the operating procedures they must undertake. It has been taught to them in schools, courses and there are certain procedures that must be followed. When to stop, what side of the vehicle that you should be approaching the driver, the reasons for the stop, the reasons for stopping which comes from section 73 of the LTA Act. However, the procedure of stopping as the Director had alluded, the level of professionalism is then again on the hands of the officer concerned.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Going back to that point that we were discussing earlier on body camera and how body camera will help when you are doing traffic stops even the random searches that you do to those that are out in public at odd hours, I think it is one of those reasons.

I think honourable Naivalurua has questions on exhibits and community policing.

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, first, let me just thank the Fiji Police team for being here this morning and the great work that you are all doing.

The questions relating to the exhibit is something that is not normally known by public at large. It is something that we are interested in and if you can give us an idea, the process and procedures more so the auditing aspect of the exhibits.

We all know that sometimes it is a critical part of the investigation process but at the end part of it when it comes to prosecution as evidences. I just want to be enlightened as a Committee on the aspects of the exhibit because we have not seen anything on the report, unless it is forbidden by law where it is not revealed. I wish if it could just be enlightened to the Committee on that.

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Mr. Chairman, exhibits are simply items kept in Police custody in the course of Police work. It ranges from lost and found properties to properties seized in the course of investigation - exhibits which will be required or is likely to be required as evidence in subsequent court proceedings or any other judicial proceedings or to further Police investigation. An example of an exhibit would be a knife which may connect a person in a murder case. An exhibit, in a criminal prosecution or a civil trial is a physical or documentary evidence brought before the Jury. The artifact or document itself is presented for the jury's inspection. Examples of exhibits may include a weapon allegedly used in the crime, marijuana sachets, a photograph, or a video recording, et cetera.

Safekeeping of all exhibits are done at the stations with proper processes and procedures (recording systems) in place. This disposal of exhibits are done in accordance with the law. This includes all types of exhibits ranging from illicit drugs - exhibits where the owner is known and there is no offence committed; exhibits where the ownership is disputed; exhibits pending in Court; exhibits that are perishable in nature; exhibits that are deemed to be proceeds of crime; et cetera. The bottom line is, there is a lawful way in the disposal of exhibits.

Therefore, the Force Standing Order (FSO) 203 outlines the process of care and custody of police exhibits and FSO 103 outlines the accountability of the exhibits in terms of records in registers, movements/disposals and periodical inspections. Also, FSO 217 outlines the process of handing confiscated liquor as exhibits.

No exhibit is disposed of during the period of any pending appeal granted by the Court, unless an order of such Court directs otherwise and following are the legislative provisions that are relied upon for disposal or destruction as per the circumstances:

- a) Disposal of Exhibits in Undetected Cases - Magistrate's Court for grant of disposal orders under section 159 of the Criminal Procedure Act 2009.
- b) Disposal of Unclaimed or Lost and Found Property - procedures prescribed by FSO No. 104 (Register of Lost and Found Property).
- c) Drugs - disposal of illicit drug and controlled equipment exhibit under section 30 of the Illicit Drugs Control Act 2004.
- d) Monetary article/Currency and Disposal of Perishable, Dangerous or Hazardous Items - restoration or disposal for such articles to any Magistrate under section 101(3) of the Criminal Procedure Act 2009.
- e) Disposal of Motor Vehicles, Trailers and Parts - notify LTA in writing of all such motor vehicles and trailers and seek the LTA's assistance in disposing of such motor vehicle and trailers as prescribed by section 74 of the Land Transport Act 1998.

Exhibits and other items seized are stored in Exhibit rooms. That is as far as what the exhibit is concerned, Sir.

On understanding reports on missing exhibits, when there is a report of missing exhibits, investigations are carried out. In the past, officers have been charged for stealing exhibits – Theft (section 291 of Crimes Act); or destroying evidence (section 189 of Crimes Act).

Our FSO 203 outlines the process of care and custody of police exhibits and FSO 103 outlines the accountability of the exhibits in terms of records in registers, movements/disposals and periodical inspections. The FSO 217 outlines the process of handing confiscated liquor as exhibits.

Those are the procedures that we use as far as exhibits, description of exhibits and how we move according to the systems and processes contained in our Force Standing Orders. That is all, Sir.

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Chairman, through you , again, just a follow-up for a layman who is listening to our *talanoa* this morning, there are always lots of questions from the public at large, wondering when they can receive their items back, sometimes how long. Would there be a message that would clarify the particular aspects, please?

MR. M. WAQA.- Mr. Chairman, as mentioned by the Assistant Commissioner of Police, releasing of exhibits will be through the court process. It has to be through the court process whereby we make an affidavit to the court that certain exhibits need to be released to the lawful owner. Sometimes the challenge to us here is, who is the lawful owner? When the lawful owner is in dispute, then it becomes an issue.

Another thing we wish to highlight, Sir, in addition to the explanation that had been given, currently in a big Police station like Central Police Station, we have a total of 4,000 exhibits, inclusive of document exhibits and also items exhibits. One of the challenges of keeping exhibits now is storage facilities, especially on the exhibits on procedure of crime, for example, we have bigger items that we do not have storage facilities to keep, such as vehicles - bigger items that are need to be kept as exhibits because in the proceeds of Crime Act, it gives the responsibility to the Police to take care of those exhibits and if we do not have the storage facilities, it will be an issue for us when the exhibits are being returned. At the moment, we do not have storage facilities to keep those big items and we hope through this Committee, there will be support on this issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I just go back quickly to a point that I missed earlier and that is on your KPIs. I read in your Annual Reports that you have a KPI to reduce crime on women. Again, I was thinking most of the crime against women are committed in domestic setting as domestic violence cases and having that as a KPI for the Police to help reduce, to me it does not make sense, given the offence is committed in a domestic setting. I was thinking that maybe, a better KPI for you would be that crime against women are successfully prosecuted. If you are dealing with crime in cities, yes, I can understand that - you can have it as a KPI because it will be your presence, you have cameras to help reduce that but having that KPI to reduce crime on women and I look at your report, I think not too much that you can do in that area.

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Mr. Chairman, while we respect your view on this, please, allow me to elaborate from the policing perspective. Violence against women and children ,we include it as a KPI on its own to the fact that it is a proactive KPI. If we are to put the detection of cases, then we are to be reactive at this point.

The reason why we are putting it as KPI and I hope the Committee will consider is that, we are putting it so that we work from the end part - working through our *Duavata*, drawing unity amongst various agencies to contain that issue before it is being committed rather than coming through the system and then appearing to us as an offence. Once it appears here, it is being addressed through successful prosecutions.

It is part of those successful prosecutions. It is only when you require data on that then we can extract it from there, but we leave it as KPI for reduction of crime against women and children so that it drives the Fiji policing posture into proactive so that we could do awareness, engagement with other stakeholders so that we can penetrate the communities, families and the number of strategies that we have in place. That is why we have put it there as KPI rather than having it as a special prosecution because we view it as being reactive rather than looking at our effort but we would like to be handling it down at the beginning of the process. That is our view.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes, we want to reduce crime against women and children. We were just trying to find a better way where we can help as the Committee in our report. Thank you, for the work that you do in dealing with crime against our women and children. That brings us to community policing, and I think it plays a big role in the awareness on the crime against women and children. Honourable Naivalurua?

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Chairman, I thank the team for both the reports that covered the community policing aspects quite well. But, perhaps, the focus of our understanding this morning is really to the changing environment and the social changes that are taking place. What aspect of strategies are you realigning to these changes to adopt yourself well to build on developing that element of trust with the community? That is an area we really want to understand, the changing environment, social changes, communications and how are we adopting in doing the community policing in that?

MR. A LUTUNAUGA.- Mr. Chairman, what the honourable Naivalurua has said is to the point about the changing and evolving criminal landscape in Fiji. We are discussing the annual report for 2018, but the community policing programmes that we have implemented, we have now begun to see this year the involvement of other stakeholders which have been missing over the years. You can see now that the Churches are talking about the issues that we have raised; the school and the honourable Minister for Education is talking about the issues that we have raised; the church groups and the *vanua* is talking about it. That is exactly what we mean by *Duavata*.

Over the years, we had challenges in sharing this responsibility. In 2017 and 2018, we laid that platform, where we did a review of the Duavata Community Policing. Then we had set up our crime prevention committees at the station level, at the district level and at the divisional level. So what is left now, is the national level for the community policing. We are glad that people are now coming on board and that to us is an indicator that now people are engaging in community policing and *Duavata* is a common platform for us to address the issues pertaining to crime in Fiji.

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Chairman, just a follow up, the way I understand in the earlier discussions on changes to the Duavata Community Policing, there were some discussions on establishing a national crime something and it is good that the Permanent Secretary from the Ministry of Home Affairs is here. It is something that we have been discussing. I really do not know whether it is still part of the plan and we really link the efforts of the community policing well when we have something. Those were the discussions whether it is still relevant in our discussions in the Duavata Community Policing or not?

MR. A LUTUNAUGA.- Mr. Chairman, it is still relevant in the process and I hope that the PS can elaborate on that issue.

MR. M. SMITH.- Mr. Chairman, perhaps the Committee would like to note that we have a project restore group which is focused on getting community policing back up into the police work this year. We currently have a consultant that has been funded by UNDP and the report will be tabled to the honourable Minister in December this year for review and implementation by the Fiji Police.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The next discussion point is on succession planning for the police. This came out from this report that I hold before you, the 2017 to 2018. I was looking at the photos and I realised that a bigger percentage of those who are here have left or changed work. That is why the question on succession planning came up. Can you just elaborate a little bit on the plans this year?

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Mr. Chairman, yes, the Fiji Police has the succession plan. The framework is through the scale settings through the analysis of data and the cadet entries. We also identify the toppers who are coming through the secondary school level and we do career pathing. We identify officers to the specific policing stream, law officers to specific policing stream to provide relevant training and workshop. That is on career path.

The third framework is the officers' professionalism and effectiveness to monitor their performance via ACR whereby, it is done annually and the staff report of officers and complaints against police on the data and the crime data in the particular area in which the officer is responsible. The succession plan is to identify the post and the postholder and the scope of all eligible candidates based on the Minimum Qualification Required Standard (MQRS), the vetting of potential candidates, 10 attributes and shortlisting by coding. To simply answer that question, we have a framework for succession planning.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Just a follow up. Do you have a problem with your attrition rate, people who are resigning in numbers? When you recruit in numbers, if you recruit 200 people today, it is based on age group and those 200 who were recruited today, turn 55 almost at the same time. So you have a batch of 200 people who are reaching retirement age at the same time. I think the Military faces the same problem because of the way we recruit. Do you face a problem on your attrition rate now or are you okay?

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Mr. Chairman, we are okay at the moment.

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Chairman, just a question on succession planning. I remember that in the Civil Service, one thing that was affecting the succession planning over the years was the contractual officers only for three years to four years and the posts were readvertised, and whether they are going to regain that position or not. Now that contractual is phased out with the OMRS, I just want to ask the question whether that was also affecting the Police Force?

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Mr. Chairman, I believe the Police did not fall under that category because we have our own and we are exempted from that, we are still at 55 years. When we reach 55, we will reapply and show our expression of interest to continue. We did not have that contractual period, the officers have subordinates and every five years, they are given that reengagement.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- So, I take it that when someone is recruited to the Force, their initial term of work is five years and then he/she is reengaged every five years.

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Yes, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The second last point that we wanted to discuss with you is an issue now – road fatalities, the carnage on our roads is so bad this year that the number spiked, compared to last year and years before. Again, we just want to have a quick discussion on how we are dealing with this. I know that it is not only Police work that deals with this issue, we have other stakeholders and we have the members of the public – the roadusers also that have to be part of this. Dealing with road fatalities, how can we bring it back down?

MR. M. WAQA.- Mr. Chairman, the FPF has been allocated \$5,000 for road safety awareness in the 2023-2024 financial year. Briefly, as of 23rd August, 2023, the current road fatality lies at 60 compared to 23 in the same period last year. The total fatalities last year were 44, together with other stakeholders, we have adopted the 3Es strategy, that is, Engineering, Education and Enforcement.

The Fiji Police Force has revamped its traffic operations and also started the joint operations with LTA and continues to conduct stop checks, radar operations, breathalyzer operations and media awareness to address the issue. Some strategies implemented by the Fiji Police Force to address the road fatalities are discussed as use of speed detection devices.

Speeding is one of the major causes of road fatality in Fiji. To address road fatality caused by speeding, the Fiji Police Force through our highway patrol cars, are currently using speed detectors on our road. There are 18 handheld laser speed detectors currently being used by the Fiji Police Force.

On the use of breathalyzer equipment instrument from January 2023 until July 2023, there were a total of 365 drivers being arrested for drunk and drive, compared to 439 in the same period last year. The total number of drivers arrested last year was 1,203. To reduce this possibility, police officers are currently using the roadside device, Alcotest 5820 and 7410 and evidential instrument namely dragger 7110 and 9510. The device accurately measures the breath alcohol and translates it to blood alcohol level.

On education, we are promoting road safety and awareness. Regular public awareness campaigns are conducted through various mediums including social media, television, radio and community events, emphasizing the importance of seat belt usage, traffic safety and the dangers of distracted driving are usually conveyed through awareness programmes.

Although the Fiji Police Media Unit continues to create awareness on media outlets including social media, traffic officers and community policing officers are also conducting awareness to schools and communities.

The Fiji Police Force is also working with key stakeholders, as I have mentioned, including LTA and FRA to combat the recent fatality spike on our roads. This is done through 14 combined operations and meetings. *Vinaka vakalevu, Sir.*

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You have said 60 now, compared to 21 the same period last year

MR. M. WAQA.- That is correct, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I thought you mentioned your budget for awareness is \$5,000. Did I hear it correctly, Is it \$5,000?

MR. M. WAQA.- That is correct, only for awareness.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Alright, \$5,000 for awareness. We might want to increase that one too. So, from what I hear again this is just my own assessment, it is business as usual as far as dealing with road fatalities. There is no big change in the strategies that we are putting in place right now. Again, I hope we can find one and deal with it. You said you have 18 cameras.

MR. M. WAQA.- The handheld cameras.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Is that 18 handheld cameras for the whole of the Police Force or just for the Southern Division?

MR. M. WAQA.- The 18 cameras is for the whole FPF.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I think the road fatality is the concern of the nation right now and we are hoping to find the solution to it quickly. It is sad statistics that we have on our road fatalities.

The last one is the emergency numbers that we have. Again, we looked at your CAS and CAP and we thought that maybe a part of it is the complaints that they have when they ring these numbers. One thing that we have found out is that we have a few emergency numbers - we have the 911 which is Emergency, 917 is for Police and 919 is Crime Stoppers. I know that 913 is if you have an emergency on electricity (EFL). So, you have all those numbers that we have for emergency.

Please, enlighten us on who mans which of those numbers - who mans 911, who mans 917 and who mans 919 and how effective are they?

MR. M. WAQA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, you have correctly said that 919 is manned by the Crime Stoppers and 911 and 917 for crime information. These two emergency lines are now manned at the Police National Command Centre in Totogo. Before, these lines are normally connected to the nearest police stations from wherever a caller is calling from but now, it is all connected to the National Command Centre which is manned 24hours by our officers.

At the moment, we have a total of more than 20 officers who are currently manning those. It is manned 24 hours and it should not be a problem now. As I have said before, we faced challenges before as it was connected to the nearest police station and now it is connected to the National Command Centre whereby we have strategies in place for Command Centre to dictate on the actions that are to be done in the Divisional Command Centre.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You are talking about 917 and 919.

MR. M. WAQA.- Yes, Sir, 919 is for Crime Stoppers, 917 and 911.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- And Crime Stoppers is also at the National Command Centre.

MR. M. WAQA.- Yes.

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Just to give clarity on that, it is at the National Call Centre which is based at the National Command Centre. It is our National Call Centre where the two lines are 911 and 917 - 919 is with the Crime Stoppers Office, which is also based at Totogo, but not in the Command Centre.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- So, 919 is also manned by police officers?

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Yes, on 24 hours because that is only for reporting of crimes, for crime stoppers. Sir, 917 is emergency.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- And 911 is also for emergency.

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- 917 is for information.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Having the three numbers, do you find it effective or would you prefer a setup like in other countries where you have a dedicated 911 unit and if anything, you will call 911 or that emergency number and then from there it is despatched to whoever needs to respond to?

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.-That is the concept that we are operating now, we have just established it last year, the National Call Centre.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- But you still have the three numbers - 911, 917 and 919.

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Sir, 911 and 917, 919 is with Crimes Stoppers which is a different entity altogether. It is not based at the Command Centre but the Call Centre is based at the Command Centre, so all calls from these two lines come to this Call Centre and it has being operated by 16 officers and they are distributed to the Divisional Command Centres for response.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I am sorry, this is one of the questions coming in from members of the public who are listening. But before we deal with that, do you mind if I call those numbers and just see their response? May be one of you can call it and then explain to them that this is a test. We do not want to hold them up. May be we can start.

(Mr. Chairman dialled 917)

That is 12 rings, I will turn it off now. No one has answered.

(Mr. Chairman dialled 919 - Crime Stoppers)

POLICE OFFICER.- Crime Stoppers, good morning.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- “Good morning, this is honourable Naupoto. We are having a meeting with the Fiji Police Force for discussion on their Annual Report. We are just testing out this number and thank you for the work that you do.”

She must be surprised.

(Mr. Chairman dialled 911)

Alright, 911, that is 12 rings and no one answered. I can imagine someone who is facing an emergency -may be dealing with someone who is seriously injured and dialling 911 and having that response is not good. Perhaps, that is also a contributor to that complaint against your service. I hope we can improve on that area.

I have a question here from a member of a public who is listening into discussions this morning. This is in relation to the e-shopping ,you know, the eBay shopping asking whether it is a scam or not, whether you have done any investigation. I think there may be some complaints on this one. Do you know anything about this?

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairnan, we have heard about it but we have not received any official report on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Alright, but people that get scammed when they buy online can also report to the Police?

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Yes, Sir. I think that is eBay they are talking about.

MR.CHAIRMAN.- Yes, the eBay. I think honourable Qereqeretabua buys from eBay.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- No, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Alright.

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Mr. Chairman, we would like to caution members of the public to take extreme caution because we have received a lot, not on eBay but other transactions. It is one of the

concerns that we are raising now. They are sending money through that but not eBay but other outlets and platforms. We are just questioning the public - do not risk it.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I think Mawi, the member of the public that sent in that question, was listening to us. I would like to thank the Police Department for the talanoa session that we have had. We deliberately wanted to have the Ministry staff sit here and listen to this talanoa session.

Again, this will be compiled into a review report. We table to Parliament and it is debated in Parliament. Hopefully, we can table your Reports in the next sitting, perhaps debated at a later sitting. Thank you so much for those responses that we have heard this morning. We have picked up few issues that I think that we can put into the Report that will hopefully help you out in the work that you do.

On that note, I thank the Fiji Police Force, on behalf of the Committee, on the work that you do, keeping everyone safe and we know that the Police will see the bad end of humanity in a way.

I declare my interest, I have a son who is also in the Police and I had noticed from him the effectiveness of looking and seeing the bad side of humanity that you deal with. We thank you for the work that you do and we hope, again, that this Committee will help to equip you better with provisions and in the way we will write the Report that will help you in the work that you do for the people of this nation.

I will now turn on to the Ministry. We had sent in some of the discussion points for the Ministry. As you understand, this is your 2018-2019 Annual Report. We try and make sense of the Report and the reasons why we have sent in these issues and have this discussion is to keep this reports alive in a way, make it useful, so that the report that we are going to write becomes useful to whoever is submitting their annual report, given this is a few years old. This is 2018-2019 Annual Report. Just to point out the fact that it is a few years old, we have a different Permanent Secretary who is sitting in front of us today given a different fund also, had submitted this Report.

We have picked those few issues that we had sent earlier to have a talanoa session on it. The first one is on search and rescue. We have noted that you had reported that the search and rescue manual has been launched that year on the reporting period. We just want to ask, how the manual has helped in the overall coordination and the conduct of search and rescue and how the Police plays a big role in search and rescue also?

MR. M. SMITH.- Mr. Chairman and honourable Members, as mentioned by you, the manual was launched way back in 2019. Basically, it provides an overview of the search and rescue architecture for Fiji and within that, the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders that are involved in the search and rescue.

As you will be well aware, Mr. Chairman, we have as the umbrella organisation under the manual, the rescue and coordination centre in Fiji and the three operational centres that are designed thematically to cover their respective areas.

The Aeronautical Search and Rescue which is under the AFL in Nadi as the operation centre, the Maritime Search and Rescue under the Navy in Suva and the Land Search and Rescue that sits with the Police Force. The memo provides specific guidance as to the roles and responsibilities of these operation centres and they are required to provide real time data and information to the RCC in case there is a need to conduct search and rescue mission within the search and rescue boundary of Fiji. Having said that the search and rescue boundary covers Fiji, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna and Vanuatu.

The manual also provides that in any event that the search and rescue point is outside the boundary of Fiji's search and rescue boundary, we can reach out to our colleagues from the Search and Rescue Centre in New Zealand, Australia, Hawaii or New Caledonia to provide resources for the coordination and conduct of the search and rescue. So that is basically what the manual has provided, it is basically a working document that provides guidance to all the stakeholders in Fiji and also in the region on search and rescue.

Since taking up the office eight weeks ago, I was advised that in addition to my primary role as Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs and Immigration, I am also the Search and Rescue Director for Fiji. In the past eight weeks I have been busy, I have visited the RFMF and the Black Rock Camp in Nadi. I visited our Police colleagues and also the Water Police, I also intend to visit other search and rescue stakeholders like MSAF, the Ministry of Transport, AFL, NDMO, and others to get a better picture and understanding of their role that they play within the search and rescue architects in Fiji.

You will also, perhaps, be aware, Mr. Chairman and honourable Members, that there is a Search and Rescue Bill that is currently with the office of the Solicitor-General and once that is cleared, it should go to Cabinet along with the Cabinet paper and once passed by Cabinet, it will then be presented to Parliament by the honourable Minister.

Our intention this year, looking ahead, is to ensure that we again review the manual in line with amendments that are currently being made to the Bill and our costed operational plan also caused for a desktop exercise to be conducted in planning for a mass casualty incident in Fiji. I also intend to reach out to my colleagues in the region who are covered under the Search and Rescue boundary for Fiji, including Kiribati, Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna and Vanuatu. So perhaps we could set up a sub-regional group on search and rescue to be able to better understand their needs and the resources, should the RCC Centre in Fiji be deployed to undertake search and rescue in one of those countries.

Mr. Chairman and honourable Members, that is a basic update on the Search and Rescue and the question that was posted. Perhaps, before I close, there is also an intention to sign an MOU with Black Rock and NDMO to try and coordinate search and rescue efforts in Fiji. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, PS. Maritime search and rescue is Navy so, Navy is 200 EEZ, Police covers the...

MR. M. SMITH.- Police covers the land areas of Fiji and AFL coordinates our aeronautical requirements, of course, with the clearance from the RFMF during flights provided by our colleagues from New Zealand, Noumea as per the current SOPs.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, PS. We move on to human trafficking. Can you highlight human trafficking as it is a big problem in Fiji, et cetera?

MR. M. SMITH.- Mr. Chairman, perhaps, just to give you an indication of how big the issue is, in 2018 and 2019, there were 23 reported cases and two cases were successfully prosecuted by the courts. I guess, the issue on the number of cases being reported has a correlation with the lack of awareness that is currently being disseminated to the public at large. We have taken steps now to start training what we call the border martial and the *Turaga Ni Koro* and the *Turaga Ni Tikina* for them to be aware of some of the signs of human trafficking.

We have also reached out to our colleagues from the United States of America. We have received that trafficking in persons report and we will be responding to them. We also facilitated a number of workshops with our CSO colleagues, organisation like the Pacific Conference of Churches, Homes of Hope, as we try and have this whole of Government approach to increase awareness and build capacity not only within the Ministry but within the stakeholders so that they can deal with this issue which we feel we are only viewing the people for their iceberg. As I have mentioned, there are only 23 cases that are reported and two were prosecuted in 2018 and 2019.

As to the National Action Plan, we are starting to draft with our stakeholders what is called the National Referral Mechanism. The idea is to share data amongst the stakeholders and the SOPs on what to do when cases are detected right through to prosecution.

We currently have 16 Government agencies and a number of CSO currently involved in the National Action Plan and the costed operational plan for this year for the Ministry is to call a meeting with the implementors of the plan to get an update on where they are and see what we can do to improve awareness, capacity and try to improve our prosecution rate going forward. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN- Do we still have people coming in and claiming refugee status?

MR. M. SMITH.- Mr. Chairman, yes, we have. We are currently working with the UNHR on the Conventions that cover Fiji on refugees and asylum seekers and I can provide the copy on the number of people that we are currently safe housing and those who have been dealt with by UNHR. The team has just returned from Canberra to finalise the SOPs for the processing of asylum seekers and refugees, people claiming refugee in Fiji.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I can provide restricted documents to the members of the Committee for your viewing.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, PS. Moving on to the Security Industry Act, we noted in the report there was an arrears of revenue that stems from the Security Industry Act. Can you just enlighten us on how our security companies come in and pay the fees or how come they are not paying the fees upfront, given this is a licence for them to operate as a security company?

MR. M. SMITH.- Mr. Chairman, perhaps, if I can provide the Committee with some background information for you to better understand the issue of arrears, as you know, the Security Industry Act was passed way back in 2010 and two of the requirements within that Act is to review the Act in every five years and to gazette the current security companies that have been licensed by the Security Industry Licensing Board, which I happen to be the Chairman, as part of my secondary appointment.

Mr. Chairman, what has been happening in the past with regards to arrears is that, during COVID-19, a lot of companies struggled not only to pay their personnel, but also to pay fees. So, at the moment, we have about \$22,000 as outstanding arrears.

We have had four meetings in the past eight weeks with the Security Industry Licencing Board, who had two representatives from the Fiji Islands Private Security Association. We had discussed this issue with them and we have taken steps to slowly recover the \$22,000.

We have asked our team that given the recent closure of our financial year, for us to be provided with an update on some of the companies that still owe money. Some have completely closed down, so we cannot claim funds from those companies. We are doing our best to try and recover the current arrears from the current companies, which are operating in Fiji. That, Mr. Chairman, is basically the effort that we are currently putting in place.

The third element to that is, we are doing a business case for additional manpower to go out and do the audits which, again, is required under the Act. Under the Act, they need to review it every five years and gazette the private security companies that have been issued licences, and I am required to conduct an audit annually with certain criteria that have to be met. Unfortunately, I do not have the manpower, but we are doing the business case to get that done.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I just jump on to the two projects, the Maritime Essential Centre (MESC) project and the National War Memorial project. Can you just enlighten us on how far these works have gone?

MR. M. SMITH.- Mr. Chairman, on the first project which is the MESC, it is funded by our colleagues from Australia for approximately \$93 million. We have visited the site twice in the past eight weeks, including the honourable Minister and the members of the diplomatic corp. The main structures have been erected, and one of the positive outcomes of the project is the community consultation that has taken place to ensure that the community is consulted with regards to the construction.

The Northern Services Yard is also progressing well. The waste treatment facility and the wetlands that will treat the wastewater has already been structured, and the Board of Governance, which I co-chair, will also meet on 16th October to get an update for the honourable Minister to present part of his parliamentary duties. Having said that, the plan is to open the facility in September, notwithstanding any further delays by the weather this year. On behalf of the Board of Governance I would like to invite the Committee to visit the site to get first-hand view of the structure that is currently being put in place as part of our Vuvale Partnership.

On the second project, which is the National War Memorial, I think the issue we have is to get agreement on the posture of the unknown soldier that is to be erected at the site. There were some concerns by our Members of Parliament, the RFMF and our stakeholders as to what posture should the unknown soldier take, should he be holding a weapon or should he have reversed arms as in a catapult posture. Once that is agreed to by the decision-makers, we will then proceed with completing the project, but the main stumbling work is to get agreement as to what the actual posture of the soldier will be.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I move on to the last issue of 27 percent of the budget unutilised as reported in the annual report. We have noted the two reasons, one was to work on the National War Memorial that was delayed and there is one on the savings, and it is referred to as due to the resignation of staff – the 27 percent of the budget that was unutilised. I know this is few years old. The resignation of staff is not the issue, it is the filling in of the positions that are vacant because people have resigned. Are you finding it difficult to fill in those positions, or what is the reason that when people resign, you do not fill in those positions?

MR. M. SMITH.- Mr. Chairman, we have already planned a workforce planning to look at the manpower requirements of the Ministry, but I think the reason that was given previously was perhaps not entirely correct. If I could just also add that part of the 27 percent was the fact that the MESC programme was already funded by the Government.

Correct me team if I am wrong, but there was an allocation of \$1 million and during the year, the Australian Government took up the funding, so it saved part of that 27 percent because the Australians were starting to fund it. So, the mediation to the manpower issues were raised and it was also because of the additional funding that were coming in, which reflected in the budget as unutilised. Perhaps, that should have been reflected as savings back to the Government.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- That is all I have, unless honourable Members have any further questions. I have one that came up for those who are listening and this is the question that have been posed, and I would like to add on to it also. Those numbers that we are referring to 911, 917 and 919, do you think that one number, like they do in some countries overseas, is better than having those three numbers that we have?

MR. A. LUTUNAUGA.- Mr. Chairman, we will do a consultation on that again. Actually the three numbers are different categories of calls. One is for information only and one is for emergency.

MR. M. SMITH.- Mr. Chairman, I have been just reminded by the Director Policy that the issue of the national short code for Fiji was discussed way back in 2019. There is currently a draft Cabinet paper that was shelved. Given the issue that has been raised by the Committee, we will go back and have a look at it with the Police and other stakeholders, and we will update the relevant organisations. He had just advised me that there is a paper that was shelved in 2019.

(Vote of Thanks by Mr. Chairman)

The meeting adjourned at 10.45 a.m.