



STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Consolidated Review Report of the Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources 2018 – 2019, 2019 – 2020 & 2020 – 2021 Annual Reports



Parliamentary Paper No: 50/2024

Published and Printed by the Department of Legislature, Parliament House, SUVA.

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Chair’s Foreword



As the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, I hereby present the Standing Committee’s consolidated review report on the annual reports of the Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources for the years 2018 – 2019, 2019 – 2020 and 2020- 2021.

The Committee has undertaken its scrutiny on the Ministry’s annual reports for the said period under review and noted the overall performance of the Ministry through the hard work of its staff.

The Committee noted the annual reports clearly defined the roles of the two Departments within the Ministry.

Whilst the Committee noted the delay in the submission of the said Annual Reports, the Committee appreciated the initiatives undertaken by the Ministry to address the delays in submitting annual reports.

The annual reports clearly articulated the Ministry’s role, annual targets, strategic priorities, achievements, responsibilities, challenges faced way forward.

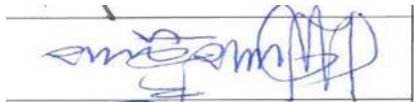
The Committee noted that the Ministry is involved in technical areas of operation such pertaining to Mineral Resources, Land Use, Land Survey, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Survey, Geological Survey, Valuation, Ground Water Exploration, Drilling, Mining and so forth. The Ministry has had to deal with constraints such as lack of resources in all specialized areas.

The Committee proposed a few recommendations to the Ministry for the purpose of improving its services.

I wish to extend my appreciation to the Executive and Staff of the Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources for their hard work and dedication.

At this juncture, I take this opportunity to thank the Honourable Members who were involved in the production of this bipartisan report namely Hon. Jone Usamate (Deputy Chairperson), Hon. Isikeli Tuiwailevu, Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu and Hon. Joseph Nand as an alternate Member.

I commend this Report to Parliament.



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Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna
Chairperson
Standing Committee on Natural Resources

ACRONYMS/GLOSSARY

GIS	Geographic Information System
MLMR	Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources
NDP	National Development Plan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SO	Standing Order

OVERALL RECOMMENDATION

The Standing Committee on Natural Resources has conducted the review of the Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources Annual Reports for 2018 – 2019 to 2020 – 2021 and recommends that Parliament take note of its recommendations as stated in the report.

Introduction

The following Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources annual reports were referred to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, pursuant to Standing Order 38 (2), by Parliament.

- 1) MLMR – 2018 -2019 referred to the Committee on Tuesday 09th May, 2022
- 2) MLMR – 2019 – 2020 referred to the Committee on Monday 27th March 2023
- 3) MLMR – 2020 – 2021 referred to the Committee on Monday 11th September 2023

The following Standing Orders of Parliament specify the role of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

- SO 109 (c) that the mandate of the Committee is to look into matters that relates to agriculture, forests, fisheries, land, minerals, environment, water and marine services.
- SO 110 (1)(c) further authorizes the Standing Committee to scrutinize the government departments with responsibility within the committee's subject area, including by investigating, inquiring into, and making recommendations relating to any aspect of such a department's administration, legislation or proposed legislative program, budget, rationalization, restructuring, functioning, organization, structure, and policy formulation.

The Committee agreed to look into the three (3) annual reports simultaneously rather than treat each report individually.

On Monday 06th to Friday 10th May 2024, the Committee undertook a five (5) days site visit to the Central, Western and the Northern divisions. This site visit allowed the Committee to substantiate and validate its findings and recommendations, the on operations of the Ministry of Lands & Minerals Resources and the Ministry of Forestry,

The Committee has been reviewing the work of both these Ministries in 2024.

Committee Remit and Composition



Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna
Chairperson
Assistant Minister for Agriculture
Government MP



Hon. Jone Usamate
Deputy Chairperson
Opposition MP



Hon. Isikeli Tuiwailevu
Assistant Minister for i Taukei
Government MP



Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu
Assistant Minister for Education
Government MP



Hon. Joseph Nand
Opposition Alternate MP

1.1 Procedure and Program

During the Committee's meeting on Tuesday 19th March 2024, the Members discussed and agreed on its Work plan for Quarter 1 and this included a proposed Committee's site visit of the Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources. The Committee initially reviewed the 2020 – 2021 Annual Report, then later reviewed the 2018 – 2019 and 2019 – 2020 Annual reports. Questions were then formulated and submitted to the Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources for their attention.

The Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources Senior Officials presented their submissions to the Committee in person on Tuesday 09th April 2024 in Parliament.

The Committee tasked the Parliamentary Research Unit review all three (3) annual reports to determine trends across key performances for the period in question from 2018 – 2021. The Committee drafted its initial draft report after reviewing all information made available, and then completed the report after returning from the site visit during the week of the 06th of May 2024.

Copies of written and oral submissions were received from the Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources officials.

Evidence and Advice Received

Please Refer to Annexures 1 - 5

2.0 Committee Deliberation and Analysis

2.1 Committee Findings

2.1.1 The overall assessment of the Ministry was not reflected in each of the annual reports under review. Upon the Ministry's submission, the Committee was informed that the Ministry achieved 80% - 90% of its targets and priorities derived from the National Development Plan during the three (3) years period. This however, was not specifically articulated in the Annual Reports themselves.

2.1.2 The Ministry had improved the manner in which its Vision, Mission and Values were articulated in the 2020-2021 Report in comparison to the Annual Reports for earlier periods. The reviews of the Ministry's Vision, Mission and Values were conducted during the Ministry's annual planning workshops.

2.1.3 The Ministry faced challenges and delays in the development of the sub- divisions at Vakamasisuasua, Legalega, Yako and Field 40. The Ministry needs to decide how it will improve the manner in which the development of such sub-divisions are carried out.

2.1.4 The Committee noted that in certain areas there was a significant disparity between actual performance and the targets specified. This disparity could either be resulting from very low targets or superhuman performance by staff. This issue needs to be addressed and the Ministry needs to review the manner in which it establishes its targets.

- 2.1.5** The Committee noted the extensive use of Information Technology and Apps to improve services, such as Vanuaview online, My Lease and the ongoing digitization of Ministry's records and files
- 2.1.6** The Committee noted the investment the Ministry has made to retain and capacity building its staff. Examples of this included the regularisation of 80 staff both Surveyors and Valuers being registered during their employment in the Ministry, the use work of attachments and staff secondment.
- 2.1.7** The Committee noted with concern the extent of unpaid leases and also noted the measures the Ministry was implementing to recover those unpaid leases such as through the waiver of interests and taking legal action where necessary.
- 2.1.8** The Committee appreciated and took note of the work undertaken to correct and finalize the Geodetic Datum.
- 2.1.9** The Committee noted the manner in which relevant SDGs have been addressed in their various programs.
- 2.1.10** The Committee noted that Qualified Audit Opinion were made by the Auditor General in reviewing the Financial Reports for the Ministry. Whilst this is a concern, the Committee noted the efforts undertaken to address the discrepancies.
- 2.1.11** The Committee noted that there were aging Acts and Regulations that the Ministry is reviewing such as the Mining Act, and others that needs to be reviewed.
- 2.1.12** The Committee noted with concern the illegal operations on sand and gravel extraction. This practice lead to both the potential degradation of the environment, and also land owners losing out on the optimal financial benefits
- 2.1.13** The Committee noted that the Ministry had a decline in its annual budget from \$37.5 million in 2018 – 2019, to \$24.9 million in 2020 – 2021.

3.0 COMMITTEE'S SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee has made the following recommendations for the Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Committee recommends that the Ministry clearly identifies performance indicators and also carries out proper assessments of the achievements of the Ministry.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Committee recommends that the Ministry reconsiders its policy of actively undertaking the development of subdivisions which includes the options of outsourcing developments works whilst maintaining oversight.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Committee recommends that the Ministry continues to enhance the use of Information Technology, digital platforms, and applications to assist the Ministry to achieve their targets and deliver better, effective and efficient service.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Committee strongly recommends that proper recovery plans for outstanding leases / rents are implemented to collect unpaid dues.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The committee strongly recommends continuation and strengthening of the Ministry's' retention policies, and also its training and capacity building policies.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The committee strongly recommends for proper application of financial procedures to enable efficient financial accountability.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Committee recommends that the Ministry strengthens the measures by which it eliminates illegal sand and gravel extraction.

4.0 Gender Analysis

The Committee noted that the Ministry had 59% Male and 41 % Female staff.

At the Executive Level, the number of females increased from 25% in 2018 – 2019 to 50% in 2020 – 2021.

Percentage of Females in the Senior Management Board (SMB) also increased from 38% in 2018 – 2019 to 67% in 2020 – 2021.

Furthermore, the Committee noted with appreciation the high percentage of female in Senior Management of the Ministry.

5.0 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Committee noted that the Ministry had addressed eight (8) SDGs in its programs in line with the goals of the NDP. The SDG's are:

- SDG 3 - Good Health and Well Being
- SDG 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation
- SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth
- SDG 10- Reduced Inequalities
- SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities
- SDG 13 - Climate Action
- SDG 14 -Life Below Water
- SDG 15- Life on Land

6.0 Conclusion

The Committee commended ~~on~~ the overall performance of the Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources for the years under review.

Members Signature:

We, as Members of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources do concur with the content of this report.



Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna
Chairperson
Assistant Minister for Agriculture

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Hon. Jone Usamate
Deputy Chairperson
Opposition MP

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Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuwailevu
Assistant Minister for i Taukei Affairs
Government MP

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Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu
Assistant Minister for Education
Government MP

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Hon. Joseph Nand
Opposition Alternate MP

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APPENDICES

1) SUBMISSION BY MLMR

2) VERBATIM – MLMR

3) SITE VISIT REPORT

4) PHOTOS

ANNEXURE 1

SUBMISSION by MLMR

ANNEXURE 2

VERBATIM

ANNEXTURE 3

SITE VISIT REPORT

ANNEXURE 4

PHOTOS