



STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE

Review Report of the Ministry of Civil Service 2021-2022

Annual Report



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
Parliamentary Paper No. 25 of 2025

March 2025
Published and Printed by the Department of Legislature, Parliament House, SUVA

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Acronyms

CLP	-	Certificate Level Programme
CSCIU	-	Civil Service Reform Implementation Unit
ESSS		Executive Support and Secretariat Services
JELT	-	Job Evaluation, Leadership Team
HRMIS	-	Human Resource Management Information System
MCS	-	Ministry of Civil Service
OMRS	-	Open Merit Recruitment and Selection System
PRP	-	Procedural Review Process
PSC	-	Public Service Commission
SCFAD	-	Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence
SDGs	-	Sustainable Development Goals
SO	-	Standing Order
TC	-	Tropical Cyclone

Chairperson's Foreword

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence (Committee) hereby submits to Parliament the Review Report of the Ministry of Civil Service 2021-2022 Annual Report.

The Ministry of Civil Service's primary responsibility is to provide guidance for consistent implementation of the central regulations governing hiring, evaluation, promotion, compensation, training and discipline of public employees in line with Government's guidelines. To improve the overall standard of performance in the civil service, the Ministry provides various training and career development opportunities that are open to all civil servants, including courses on leadership, governance, project management and human resources.

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence has fulfilled its mandate approved by Parliament which was to investigate the contents of the Ministry of Civil Service 2021-2022 Annual Report and provide a report to Parliament. The Committee has conducted its review and formulated findings with regard to the Ministry's performance.

The Committee report has eight (8) recommendations for consideration and commends the Ministry for being up to date with its Annual Reports. I wish to extend my gratitude to the Permanent Secretary, Mr. Parmesh Chand and his staff for their timely assistance in this inquiry.

I take this opportunity to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence and the Secretariat for compiling this bipartisan report and the Secretariat for their invaluable support. I also would like to acknowledge the immense participation and contributions of Hon. Joseph Nand and Hon. Alipate Tuicolo who both sat in as alternate members during the deliberations of this review report.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, I submit this report to Parliament.



Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua
Chairperson

Recommendations

- 1.0 The Committee recommends that the submission of Annual Reports be a requirement during pre-budget consultations with the Ministry of Finance. Such initiative should be overseen by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Civil Service (a consideration for renewal of contracts for Permanent Secretaries (*refer to paragraph 3.3.1*)).
- 2.0 The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Civil Service should undertake annual review or audit on performance-based system that Ministries and Departments have integrated some staff retention strategies for consideration in its operational plans (*refer to paragraph 3.3.3*).
- 3.0 The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Civil Service consider utilizing the Govnet email blast distribution system for new and updated circulars to improve awareness and ensure timely dissemination to all Civil Servants (*refer to paragraph 3.3.4*).
- 4.0 The Committee is of the view that in order to address OMRS issues, the Ministry of Civil Service needs to continuously provide support to all Ministries and Departments in order to achieve a culture of excellence through ongoing audits, meetings, and continuous feedback (*refer to paragraph 3.3.5*).
- 5.0 The Committee recommends that the Ministries and Departments conduct annual refresher trainings on the OMRS guidelines for all panel members to ensure compliance and understanding (*refer to paragraph 3.3.7*).
- 6.0 The Committee recommends that Ministries and Departments implement stricter monitoring systems to track compliance with bond agreements and enhance career development opportunities to retain Civil Servants especially after the bonded period is over (*refer to paragraph 3.3.9*).
- 7.0 The Committee recommends that each Ministry and Department to have a complaints management system to ensure that timelines are strictly adhered to and feedback provided as soon as practicable (*refer to paragraph 3.3.10*).
- 8.0 The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Public Works Meteorological Services and Ministry of Civil Service undertake regular visits to all divisional quarters to ensure that maintenance and renovations are undertaken on a regular basis in order to avoid high cost of maintenance (*refer to paragraph 3.3.11*).

1.0 Committee Remit and Composition

Under Standing Order 109(2)(e) the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence is mandated to look into matters related to Fiji's relations with other countries, development aid, foreign direct investment, oversight of the military, and relations with multi-lateral organizations. The members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence are as follows:



Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua
Chairperson
Deputy Speaker of Parliament
Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs



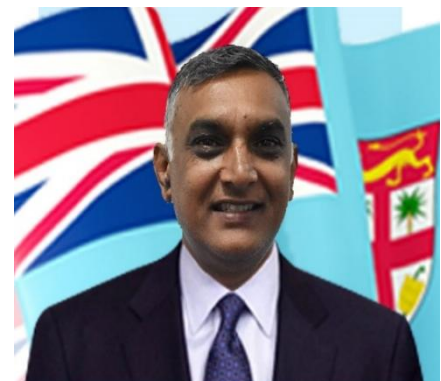
Hon. Rinesh Sharma
Deputy Chairperson



Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu
Member
Assistant Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Heritage and Arts



Hon. Penioni Ravunawa
Member
Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services



Hon. Virendra Lal
Member

1.1 Committee Secretariat Team

Supporting the Committee in its work is a group of dedicated Parliament Officers serving as the Committee Secretariat. These officers are appointed and delegated by the Secretary-General to Parliament in accordance with Standing Order 15(3)(i). The Secretariat team is made up of the following Parliament officers:

- Mrs. Susana Korovou – Senior Committee Clerk
- Mrs. Elesi Tabuyaqona – Deputy Committee Clerk

2.0 Background and Terms of Reference

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence (the Committee), was referred the Ministry of Civil Service 2021-2022 Annual Report (Annual Report) on 03 December 2024. The referral of the Annual Report was done in accordance with SO 38(2), whereby the Committee was assigned to investigate the contents of the report and provide a report to Parliament at a future Sitting. This report is outside the usual mandate of the Committee, but the referral was made to help ease the workload of the other Standing Committees.

2.1 Procedure and Program

I. Written Evidence Received

In accordance with Standing Order 112(1)(c), the Committee exercised its powers and requested for a written response from the Ministry of Civil Service.

The Committee had drafted questions which were sent to the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Civil Service for its response. A summary of the written response is provided in a later part of this report, under the heading ‘Committee’s Deliberation and Analysis’ and copies of the written submission can be obtained from the online appendices of this report, which can be accessed from the Parliament website: www.parliament.gov.fj

3.0 Committee Deliberation and Analysis

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The Ministry of Civil Service’s role is to support Government Civil Service reforms through capacity building and enhancing the overall capability of the Civil Service and provide policy advice to Ministries in relation to the responsibilities of Permanent Secretaries pursuant to section 127 of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji. Additionally, the Ministry provides secretariat and administrative support to the Public Service Commission (PSC).

3.1.2 The responsibilities of MCS are performed by the following five divisions:

- i. Policy Development, Implementation and Monitoring Unit;
- ii. Training Unit;
- iii. PSC Secretariat;
- iv. Major Events Unit; and
- v. Business Management Unit.

3.2 Summary of the 2021-2022 Performance and Achievements

A summary of achievements for the period under review are listed below:

3.2.1 Policy Development, Implementation and Monitoring Unit

This Unit is responsible for providing policy advice to Ministries ensuring alignment and consistency with overarching legislation, regulations, policies and guidelines. The Unit monitors and guides Ministries in the effective implementation of policies approved by the Public Service Commission (PSC).

The Unit also identifies and proposes solutions to address the scarcity of specialized skills within the Civil Service. In addition, the Unit facilitates the Whole of Government pool recruitment process for common cadre positions including drivers, clerical officers, administrative officers, accounts officers and communications officers. Success merit lists are shared with the relevant Ministry ensuring a fair and transparent selection process. Table 1 shows the achievements for the year 2021-2022:

	2021-2022
No. of Policy Advice on Human Resource Policy	131
Civil Servant Grievances	17 **All grievances were successfully resolved

Table 1: MCS’s achievements for 2021-2022

3.2.1.1 Re-engagement: Requests, approved and declined

Given the high staff turnover, the MCS during the year under review considered the need for retention in the Civil Service. The approval for re-engagement of civil servants over the age of 55 is vested upon the Minister responsible for Civil Service in accordance with Regulation 14 of the Civil Service (General) (Amendment) Regulation 1999. Table 2 shows a summary of requests for re-engagement submitted by Ministries and Departments:

Ministry	2021-2022	
	No. of Request - Approved	Request Declined
Ministry of Health & Medical Services	27	-
Ministry of iTaukei Affairs	2	1
Office of the Prime Minister	3	-
Ministry of Agriculture	1	1
Ministry of Education, Heritage & Arts	1	-
Office of the President	2	-
Ministry of Rural, Maritime and Arts	1	-
Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviations	1	1
Ministry of Defence, National Security and Policing	1	1
TOTAL	39	4

Table 2: No. of Requests for Re-engagement of Civil Servants over 55 years

3.2.1.2 Employee Grievances

It was reported that during the year under review, the Ministry received a total of 17 grievances from Civil Servants, which were thoroughly assessed and resolved. The majority of grievances received related to the non-adherence of established policies and guidelines by certain Ministries resulting in different interpretations and inconsistencies. The Ministry ensured that Civil Servants received the utmost support, and concerns were duly acknowledged and resolved, fostering a conducive working environment that upholds the principles of good governance and accountability.

3.2.1.3 Policy clarifications

The Unit also delivers comprehensive policy advice to all government Ministries and Departments concerning human resource policies. This guidance aims to promote consistency and adherence to contemporary standards in personal management across the public sector. During the year 2021-2022, a total of 131 policy clarifications were provided to respective Ministries and Departments. Table 3 shows the number of policy clarifications provided to relevant Ministries.

Type of Policy Clarifications	No. of Policy Given
Allowances – Housing, Acting, Rural and Maritime, Transfer	33
Civil Service Circulars	16
Staff Re-engagement	4

Work from Home	4
PSC Acts, Policies and Guidelines	10
Civil Service Insurance	3
Out-Patient Sick Leave	9
Work from Home	4
Bonding Arrangements	2
Working Hours – Overtime, Toll	17
Annual Report	2
COVID-19	6
Leave Conditions	14
Terms and Conditions of Employment	4
Staff engaged as Election Officials	2

Table 3: Type of Policy Clarifications provided during 2021-2022

3.2.1.4 Job Evaluation, Leadership Team and Moderation (JELT)

JELT is responsible for ensuring consistent evaluations throughout the Civil Service. In the year under review, 31 positions from 12 Ministries and Departments were successfully evaluated and moderated.

3.2.1.5 Open Merit Recruitment and Selection (OMRS) Audit

Ongoing audits of OMRS were undertaken for 20 Ministries targeting the recruitment process from August to October 2021. Of these, five (5) Ministries were exempted as they did not conduct any recruitment for this period. As a result, the audit reported an increase in progress, with 40 percent scoring above 90 percent compliance within the provision outlined in the OMRS guideline.

Achievements	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
OMRS Audits	Two cycles of audits were undertaken with the results as follows; 70% of the Ministries demonstrated excellent progress with 30% scoring above and 90% for compliance.	This was put on hold due to COVID-19 pandemic. 30% of the Ministries demonstrated excellent progress with 30% scoring above 90% for compliance to the OMRS guidelines.	20 Ministries were selected for ongoing audits of OMRS (Open Merit Recruitment and Selection) demonstrating an increase in progress with 40% scoring above 90% compliance.
Job Evaluation Leadership Team (JELT)	Evaluated and moderated a total of 66 positions from 12 Ministries and Departments.	Evaluated and moderated a total of 66 positions from 12 Ministries and Departments.	Evaluated and moderated 31 positions from 12 Ministries and Departments.

Table 4: Number of Achievements for Civil Service Coordination and Implementation Unit

3.2.1.6 Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS)

The HRMIS for the Whole of Government was established in 2019 with the system adopted from the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS). HRMIS refers to a software solution that integrates various HR functions, such as recruitment, employee onboarding, performance management, training and development, payroll management, and employee records, into a single platform. The user base at the end of the year was approximately 4,000.

3.2.2 **Executive Support and Secretariat Services (ESSS)**

The ESSS is responsible for secretariat services to the Public Service Commission, managing contracts for all Permanent Secretaries including leave, and undertakes executive support for the Permanent Secretary for Civil Service.

3.2.2.1 Recruitment of Permanent Secretaries

For the year under review (2021-2022), PSC advertised five (5) vacant Permanent Secretary positions of which 3 were filled while 2 remained on acting positions. A total of 11 addendums of contract issued to Permanent Secretaries whose contracts were expiring in 2022.

3.2.2.2 Guidelines Approved by the Commission

The PSC for the year under review discussed and endorsed the Customer Service Guidelines and Quick Guide of the Civil Service.

3.2.2.3 Procedural Review Process (PRP)

The PSC administers the PRP which is an appeal mechanism for the recruitment process for appointments to substantive vacancies in the civil service. This is a portal where civil servants can lodge an appeal should the appointment be seen as prejudiced or an injustice is evident during the OMRS process. During the year under review, PSC received 151 appeals of which 33 appeals were successful, 103 appeals were unsuccessful, eight (8) were withdrawn, six (6) appeals were ineligible, while one (1) appeal was not processed as the recruitment and selection process was incomplete.

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Appeal Applications Received	112	105	151
Appeals unsuccessful	66	22	103
Appeals upheld	35	69	1
Appeals ineligible	5	2	6
Appeal withdrawn	4	-	8
Vacancies re-advertised/withdrawn	2	12	0

Table 5: Total Number of Appeal Applications for the years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021

3.2.3 Training Division

The Training Division works closely with Ministries, development partners, and other stakeholders to build the capacity of civil servants. The learning and development needs are submitted by Ministries and recorded in a central register that is updated annually.

3.2.3.1 Core Skills Training

The Ministry during the year under review conducted training that has been identified as vital to the operation of Government (Core Skills Training) and also through coordination with development partners funding training for learning and development opportunities. Tables 6, 7, and 8 show the type of Training delivered to Civil Servants from 2019-2022.

Training Modules	2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022	
	No. of Sessions	No. Trained	No. of Sessions	No. Trained	No. of Sessions	No. Trained
Open Merit Recruitment and Selection Training	20	619	18	414	19	308
Investigators Officers Training	15	476	12	224	11	208
Refresher – Investigators officers Training	-	-	2	28	8	105
Effective Job Application and Job Interview Skills Training	15	521	20	243	2	27
Exceptional Customer Service Training	1	30	2	61	8	220
Effective Performance Management	-	-	21	489	8	140
Developing Individual Work Plan	-	-	20	405	-	-
Interim Performance Management	-	-	1	10	-	-
Leadership Development Program	4	80	-	-	-	-
Labour Compliance – ERA	-	-	-	-	5	110
Internal Events Management	-	-	-	-	2	30
Assessing and Discussing Performance	-	-	-	-	4	107
TOTAL	55	1,726	96	1,874	69	1,287

Table 6: Number of Training Courses facilitated in 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022

Type of Coordinated Training	No. of Sessions	No. of Trainees
Records Management	4	119
Anti-Bribery	3	69
Procurement	4	64
Writing project proposals and plans (online)	1	120

ETHOS	3	71
TOTAL	15	443

Table 7: Total Number of Coordinated Training delivered in 2021-2022

Local Training	
No. of Local Training conducted	84
No. of Training Sessions	1,730

Table 8: Total No. of Local Training conducted in 2021-2022

3.2.3.2 Leadership Development Training

The Leadership Development Programme is designed to equip senior Civil Servants with essential leadership skills while also fostering networking opportunities within the public sector. This program is open to Civil Servants at Band H and above. Additionally, technical staff at B and G may also participate based on nominations from their respective Ministries. Leadership Development Training continued to be recognized as a core skill area that required major investment and capacity building within the Civil Service. For the year under review, three (3) training courses were conducted online, and three (3) face-to-face Senior Officers Leadership Forum were facilitated.

3.2.3.3 Development Partner Learning and Development Opportunities

For the year under review, the Ministry in collaboration with development partners awarded scholarships to successful applicants. Table 9 shows the number of scholarships and short courses awarded to civil servants.

Scholarships/Short Training	2021-2022
Scholarship offered	209
Short Courses – Marketed	220
Short Courses – Applications received and processed	370

Table 9: Summary of Scholarships/Short Training offered during 2021-2022

3.2.4 **Business Management Services**

This Unit coordinates the corporate services responsibilities of MCS, including human resources administration, customer complaints and managing the Ministry's properties.

3.2.4.1 Human Resources

3.2.4.1.1 Managing the Staff Establishment

The Committee noted that in the 2021-2022 financial year, the Ministry had a staff establishment of 36 positions of which 1 position was vacant. Fifty-two percent (52%) of the Ministry's workforce were women.

3.2.4.1.2 Learning and Development (L&D)

During the 2019-2020 financial year, 17 staff attended training facilitated by MCS Training Division.

3.2.4.1.3 Customer Call Centre

The Customer Care Call Centre (CCCC) was established to address grievances and receive feedback from the public about the quality of services provided by Ministries. MCS in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) and the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations (MEPIR). MCS reported that in 2021-2022, the Ministry received a total of 844 complaints (400 for MHMS and 444 for the MEPIR).

3.2.4.1.4 The Government Feedback Call Centre

The Government Feedback Call Centre (GFCC) was launched at the end of the 2021-2022 financial year following the approval of the Customer Service Guideline. This was introduced as a centralized toll-free call centre to receive feedback from members of the public regarding any Government Ministry or Department. It was reported that the two existing toll-free lines for MHMS and MEPIR were merged to form the 157 toll free lines. It was reported that a total of 1,096 feedback was received in 2022 with 68.70% of the feedback related to inquiries from the general public, 18.16% on complaints, 3.10% on suggestions and 9.95% on others.

3.2.4.1.5 Government Service Centre (GCS)

The GCS is an information hub that provides a range of information, services and referrals to other Government Ministries and agencies. All enquiries received at the GSC are recorded digitally on the Customer Management System with a total of 2,692 entries recorded for the financial year.

3.2.5 Budget Utilization

MCS in 2021-2022 was allocated \$2.38 million with total utilization of \$2.02 million accounting to an 85% utilisation rate.

3.3 Committee Findings

3.3.1 Backlog of Annual Reports – A Key Output for Permanent Secretaries

The Committee was informed that the production of Annual Reports is an output for all Permanent Secretaries as this is reflected in all Ministries and Departments' Costed Operational Plan (COP) and required by the Ministry of Finance under the Financial Management Act 2004. The standard requirements for Annual Reports are reflected in Section 45 of the Financial Management Act 2004.

The Committee recommends that the submission of Annual Reports be a requirement during pre-budget consultations with the Ministry of Finance. Such initiative should be overseen by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Civil Service (a consideration for renewal of contracts for Permanent Secretaries).

3.3.2 Amendments to the General Orders 2011

The Committee is concerned with the high cost of living and understands that there is a need to upgrade civil servants' meal allowances and other allowances including housing, acting, rural and maritime transfer.

The Committee notes that the General Orders 2011 is currently under review in consultation with relevant unions and government ministries. This is planned to be completed and implemented in August 2025.

The Committee was informed that proposed amendments on allowances were reviewed in 2024 and submitted to the Ministry of Finance for consideration in the 2024-2025 budget. However, due to funding constraints, this was put on hold by the Ministry of Finance.

The Committee commends MCS for considering that such an important issue be part of the proposal to the Ministry of Finance in the 2025-2026 Budget and further recommends that due consideration be placed on the review of the civil servants' allowances.

3.3.3 Addressing Staff Retention Issues

The Committee was informed that MCS adopts a multi-faceted approach in addressing retention in Ministries and Departments and highlighted below are some of the key strategies that are being considered:

- i. Review and adjustment of salary structures and allowances to remain competitive.
- ii. Ensuring that remuneration aligns with the cost of living and market rates.
- iii. Introduction of retention allowances for critical and high-demand positions.
- iv. Providing structured career progression pathways and clear promotion criteria.

- v. Supporting local and international training programs, scholarships and professional certifications.
- vi. Enhancing workplace infrastructure, tools, and resources to improve efficiency.
- vii. Providing a safe and conducive working environment to boost morale and productivity.
- viii. Reviewing performance-based rewards systems.
- ix. Recognising and celebrating outstanding employee contributions through awards and commendations.
 - x. Engaging unions and staff associations in continuous dialogue to address concerns.
 - xi. Enhancing grievance handling mechanisms to ensure staff feel heard and valued.
 - xii. Implementing fair and transparent policies to build trust and loyalty.
- xiii. Identifying high-potential employees and preparing them for leadership roles.
- xiv. Establishing structured mentorship and coaching programs.
- xv. Encouraging knowledge transfer and capacity building.

The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Civil Service should undertake annual review or audit on performance-based system that Ministries and Departments have integrated some staff retention strategies for consideration in its operational plans.

3.3.4 Circulation of PSC Circulars

The Committee was informed that the Ministry of Civil Service has been circulating new PSC Circulars to the respective Ministries and Departments through the Personal Assistants (PAs) to the Permanent Secretaries and all HR Departments to ensure proper dissemination. MSC has been uploading Circulars on its official website since 2020.

The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Civil Service consider utilizing the Govnet email blast distribution system for new and updated circulars to improve awareness and ensure timely dissemination to all Civil Servants.

3.3.5 Adherence to OMRS Guidelines

The Ministry of Civil Service reported that in the 2021-2022 audits, only eight (8) Ministries scored above 90%, while the remaining 7 Ministries scored below 90%. Out of twenty, five Ministries were exempted from the audit as they did not conduct recruitment during this period. The following reasons were identified as contributing factors to Ministries not achieving a 100% compliance rating:

- Benchmarking not set prior to marking: According to the OMRS Guideline Clause 3.3, the benchmark is the level required by applicants to be considered suitable for appointment. It should be set in advance of scoring applicants at any stage of the assessment period.

- Use of Acronyms in Role Descriptions: As per Clause 5.4.6 of the guideline, language must be in public usage, easily understood, with no acronyms included.
- Employment duration not stated: The employment duration was not stated in the advertisement or the role description, which remains an issue in the 2024-2025 audit. According to the OMRS Guideline Clause 6.4.2, it should be clearly stated whether the position is of an ongoing nature or short-term/temporary.
- Applications Acknowledged but not Documented: As per Clause 6.8, all applications must be acknowledged to confirm receipt in the format approved by the Permanent Secretary.
- Regret Notifications Not Documented: Regret Notifications were sent to unsuccessful applicant; however, sample notifications were not documented. According to Clause 9.9, all applicants must be advised of the outcome of their application within five days of confirmation that they were unsuccessful.

The Ministry of Civil Service in its written submission reported that notable improvements in compliance with the OMRS Guideline were observed during the two cycles conducted, covering new appointments from January to July 2024.

The Committee is of the view that in order to address OMRS issues, the Ministry of Civil Service needs to continuously provide support to all Ministries and Departments in order to achieve a culture of excellence through ongoing audits, meetings, and continuous feedback.

3.3.6 Accessibility of HRMIS in the Rural and Maritime Areas

According to the Ministry of Civil Service, the Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) is exclusively accessible via the GOVNET network, which may not extend to certain rural and maritime regions, potentially limiting access for civil servants in these areas. However, the Employee Portal is designed for broader accessibility by civil servants, available through any internet connection.

3.3.7 Evaluation of the Procedural Review Process

The Public Service Commission (PSC) manages the Procedural Review Process (Appeals). As highlighted, most of the reasons for the appeals received by PSC include the following:

- Meeting the Knowledge, Experience, Skills, and Abilities (KESA) criteria but not being shortlisted;
- Panel members lacking the required attributes;
- Interview questions not aligning with the KESA;
- Possessing relevant work experience but not being appointed; and

- Prolonged recruitment and selection process with completions extending beyond four months.

From 2018-2022, the following outcomes of appeals were recorded:

	Total Appeal Applications Received	Number of Appeals were Upheld
2018-2019	128	27
2020-2021	105	22
2021-2022	151	33

The Ministry of Civil Service highlighted some challenges encountered including the following:

- Inconsistencies among Ministries and Departments in adhering to the OMRS Guidelines.
- Delayed submission of Selection Reports to the Secretariat for review.
- Appellants lacking clarity on the basis of their appeals.

The Committee recommends that the Ministries and Departments conduct annual refresher trainings on the OMRS guidelines for all panel members to ensure compliance and understanding.

3.3.8 Return on Investment – Scholarships/Short Training

Most scholarships and training programs offered through development partners are fully funded, covering tuition fees, airfare, accommodation, and meal allowances. The Ministry usually covers transit allowances for civil servants travelling abroad to manage expenses during layovers. In instances where a training program does not cover specific costs, such as airfare, the Ministry may choose to fund these expenses at the discretion of the Permanent Secretary.

The assessment of return on investment is the responsibility of the respective Ministry and Department to monitor the performance and impact of trained civil servants upon their return using the Learning Contract Proposal. The assessment focuses more on the individual's contribution to capacity building, policy implementation, and overall service delivery improvements within their Ministry.

3.3.9 Bonded Civil Servants – Scholarships

Civil Servants approved by their respective Ministries and Departments to attend training of more than six months in duration, locally or overseas, are required to sign a bond agreement.

The bond period is calculated based on the training duration, typically multiplying the length of study by 1.5. Under the delegation of powers, the recipients' agencies monitor the bond arrangements. In a situation where a Civil Servant resigns or migrates before completing the bond period, they are required to repay the government an amount equivalent to the cost of the training or scholarship received. This is managed by the ministry involved.

Some of the challenges include the following:

- **Tracking and Monitoring:** Keeping accurate records of bonded employees and ensuring compliance with the terms of the agreement; and
- **Retention Issues:** Some Civil Servants leave the service despite receiving training, leading to a loss of investment for the government.

The Committee recommends that Ministries and Departments implement stricter monitoring systems to track compliance with bond agreements and enhance career development opportunities to retain Civil Servants especially after the bonded period is over.

3.3.10 Effectiveness of the Complaints Management System

The Ministry of Civil Service reported that the budget allocated to Customer Service in 2021-2022 was \$353,400.00 and actual expenditure was \$311,755.00. The Ministry highlighted that not all Ministries and Departments have a robust feedback system; therefore, the Government Feedback Call Centre serves as a central hub for collecting feedback across all Government Ministries.

The Call Centre provides Ministries with real-time feedback on the services they deliver, helping them identify areas for improvement. Focal points within Ministries can view and act on feedback through predefined forms, making report generation simple and efficient.

Some of the challenges encountered by the Ministry include the lack of support from Ministries in providing updated information to call agents, lack of cooperation from focal points in closing feedback in time and high turnover of focal points, affecting continuity.

The Committee recommends that each Ministry and Department to have a complaints management system to ensure that timelines are strictly adhered to and feedback provided as soon as practicable.

3.3.11 Status of Government Quarters

The Divisional Housing Board with the Commissioner's Office take the lead role in the management of quarters in respective divisions, where they allocate adequate housing for eligible officers and also provide housing allowances as per Ministries/Departments request on a case-by-case basis.

For any major or minor, urgent maintenance request, the Ministry of Public Works and Meteorological Services and Ministry of Civil Service are consulted for any renovation works required which is planned according to the nature of the request and renovation program.

According to the Ministry, most quarters that are currently occupied are in liveable conditions.

There are currently seven (7) quarters in the Western Division which are vacant due to termite infestation and structural damage. The Northern Division has three (3) quarters which are vacant due to the infestation problem.

For quarters in Suva, any major and minor urgent maintenance request are submitted to the Ministry of Civil Service – Office Accommodation and Government Housing Unit (OAGU) for consultation to seek approvals and undertake the necessary works in line with the Procurement Regulation in place and depending on the funding allocated.

The Committee commends the Ministry of Civil Service for considering the installation of solar systems in sixty-one (61) quarters in respective divisions leading towards green energy growth to further assists in cost savings, energy independence and environmental sustainability.

The table below shows the breakdown of the number of quarters in each division, number of quarters recently renovated, the number of quarters audited and requiring major renovation works (team is currently working on the scope of works), number of quarters in divisional areas and Suva requiring major renovation works (team is currently evaluating through the tender process).

Division	District	Total	No. of Quarter Renovated	No. of Quarters Audited (scope of works)	No. of Quarters Audited (tender)
Northern	Labasa	173	35	60	0
	Savusavu	73			
	Nabouwalu	15			
	Saqani	12			
	Tukavesi	8			
	Taveuni	86			
	TOTAL	367			

Western	Tavua	29	84	75	0
	Ra	22			
	Nadi	70			
	Ba	22			
	Sigatoka	31			
	Lautoka	192			
	TOTAL	366			
Central	Korovou	58	36	50	0
	Serua/Namosi	34			
	Naitasiri	49			
	Nausori	50			
	Suva (Market Rate)	213			
	Colo-i-Suva	40			
	Delainavesi	4			
	Koronivia	70			
	TOTAL	518			
Eastern	Vunisea	90	0	40	0
	Koro	10			
	Levuka	55			
	Kadavu	29			
	Gau/Nairai/Batiki	13			
	Rotuma	20			
	TOTAL	217			
Suva	Suva	153	0	0	24
Grand Total		1,468	308	225	24

The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Public Works and Ministry of Civil Service undertake regular visits to all divisional quarters to ensure that maintenance and renovations are undertaken on a regular basis in order to avoid high cost of maintenance.

4.0 Sustainable Development Goals

4.1 Gender Equality in Parliamentary Scrutiny

- 4.1.1 Gender is a critical dimension in Parliamentary scrutiny. Standing Order 110(2) mandates Committees to ensure full consideration of the principle of gender equality, ensuring that impacts benefit both men and women equally.
- 4.1.2 The organizational structure, as reflected in the annual report, includes a total of 36 established staff, with 1 vacant position. Of the filled positions, 18 (52%) are held by women and 17 (48%) by men. The Committee noted that a significant number of women held managerial positions during the period under review. This is an encouraging trend.

4.2 Sustainable Development Goals Alignment

- 4.2.1 The Ministry of Civil Service has identified key elements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 16, Target 16.6, which focuses on transparent and accountable institutions.

5.0 Conclusion

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence has fulfilled its mandate approved by Parliament which was to investigate the contents of the Ministry of Civil Service 2021-2022 Annual Report and provide a report to Parliament. The Committee has conducted its review and formulated the findings with regard to the Ministry's performance.

The Committee report is bi-partisan and has eight (8) recommendations for consideration. The Committee is grateful and commends the Commission for being up to date with its Annual Reports.

6.0 Committee Members' Signatures



Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua
Chairperson



Hon. Rinesh Sharma
Deputy Chairperson



Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu
Member



Hon. Penioni Ravunawa
Member



Hon. Virendra Lal
Member

7.0 Annexure

Published Evidence

Written evidence, transcripts and supporting documents can be viewed on the Parliament website at the following link:

<https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-foreign-affairs-and-defence/>