



STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Review Report on the 2017 National Fire Authority Annual Report



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
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Chairperson's Foreword

I am pleased to present the Standing Committee on Social Affairs Review *Report on the 2017 National Fire Authority Annual Report*.

As mandated under Standing Order 109(2)(b), the Committee considers issues related to health, education, social services, labour, aviation, culture and media.

As part of the scrutiny process, the Committee received written responses from National Fire Authority together with additional information during the site visit. The process has proven to be an effective means of gauging its progress and maintaining a high level of scrutiny of the agency under review.

National Fire Authority continues to play a pivotal role in providing fire emergency services to the people of Fiji. The commissioning of new Fire stations in Korolevu, Korovou, Seaqaqa, Savusavu and Taveuni, during the period under review confirms NFA's ability to expand its services to rural communities. Furthermore, NFA had procured land in Keiyasi, Pacific Harbour, Navakai, Korovisilou, Levuka and Tavua, to increase its vital services to the people in the rural areas.

The Committee noted that as of 31st July 2017, NFA had 18 Fire Stations and 78 vehicles around Fiji with a total staff of 394.

Despite facing the challenges in utilising limited budget, maintaining high cost of ageing vehicle and procuring of expensive firefighting equipment from abroad, the Committee acknowledged the hard work carried out by the firefighters in protecting the properties and lives of people of Fiji.

As part of the legislative reform, the Committee commended NFA's efforts to expand its services beyond its mandated boundaries.

To conclude, I sincerely thank the Chief Executive Officer of the National Fire Authority and their officials for their services and contributions to this review process and commend the implementation of our recommendations.

I also thank the Honourable members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure, Hon. Alipate Tuicolo, Hon. Aliko Bia, Hon. Viam Pillay, Hon. Parveen Bala and Hon. Ketan Lal for their invaluable input and support.

Finally, I thank the Secretariat for their hard work and dedication in compiling this report.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I commend this report to Parliament.



.....
Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu
Chairperson

Acronym

Committee	Standing Committee on Social Affairs
Ministry	Ministry of Housing and Local Government
MP	Member of Parliament
NFA	National Fire Authority
SO	Standing Order
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Emergency Fund

Committee Members

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs (**‘Committee’**) is established under Section 70 of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji and Standing Order 109. The Committee’s mandate and functions are provided under SO 109 (2) and 110 (1) (a)-(d) & (f).

The Members of Committee are:



Chairperson



Deputy Chairperson



Member



Member



Member



Member

1.0 Introduction

The National Fire Authority 2017 Annual Report was tabled in Parliament on 15th April 2024 and referred to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs pursuant to Standing Orders 109(2) (b).

Standing Orders 109 (2)(b) allows the Standing Committee on Social Affairs to examine matters related to health, education, social services, labour, aviation, culture and media.

1.1. Committee Procedures

Deliberations on the National Fire Authority 2017 Annual Report commenced in January 2026. The Committee read the reports, prepared questions and sought clarifications on key issues of interest from the National Fire Authority.

The Committee held Public Submission with the Executives of National Fire Authority on 27th January 2026.

Further the Committee visited the NFA Headquarters in Walu Bay, Tavua, Rakiraki, Nabouwalu, Seaqaqa, Labasa and Savusavu during its site visit from 17.02.2026 to 27.02.26.

Upon receipt of all pertinent information pertaining to the Committee's queries, the Review Report on National Fire Authority 2017 Annual Report was subsequently endorsed on 5th March 2026.

The responses received from the National Fire Authority can be viewed at the following link <https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-social-affairs/>

2.0 Background

The Fiji National Fire Authority (NFA) has a rich history that began with the establishment of the fire service in Fiji. Here are some key milestones in the NFA's history:

- 1922: The establishment of a new fire department in Suva, which paved the way for the establishment of NFA in 1995.
- 1995: The NFA was formally established under the National Fire Service Act 1994, taking over from the board of fire commissioners of Suva and all municipal councils.
- 2010: The NFA included the provision of emergency ambulance services.
- 2023: The NFA celebrated its 100 years of service, with plans to establish more fire stations and improve coverage across Fiji.

In accordance with the National Fire Service Act, 1994, NFA Board is responsible for the following roles:

- Determine the strategic direction of the Authority and develop supporting policies.
- Assess performance against strategies and monitor the performance of Management.
- Have proper stewardship and control of the Authority's activities ensuring the integrity of management information systems and reporting to the relevant stakeholders.
- Approve policies and oversee the management of business risk, safety and occupational health and environmental issues.

The Committee noted that following the expiry of the term of the previous board members, on 31st December 2015, only the Board Chairman, Commander Francis Kean was reappointed by the then Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure & Transport with effect from 1st January 2016.

As a result, there were no Board meetings held from 1st January 2016 to 31st March 2017 hence during this period NFA's Senior Management worked with the Board Chairman on the day to day running of NFA's business operations. The new five member board were appointed on 4th April 2017.

The Table below highlights the establishment of four new Fire Stations during the period under review.

Date	Location	Cost (FJD)
26.10.2016	Korolevu - Nadroga	\$1.3 million
28.10.2016	Korovou - Tailevu	\$1.2 million
25.02.2017	Seaqaga - Macuata	\$1.2 million
02.03.2017	Waiyevo - Taveuni	\$1.1 million

3.0 Key Findings

The key findings of the Committee were:

- 3.1 The Committee commends the work of the NFA in providing efficient fire services to the people of Fiji despite mandated only to provide fire services within the Municipal boundaries.
- 3.2 The Committee noted with great concern that Government does not provide full 25% funding mandated under the National Fire Services Act.
- 3.3 The Committee noted that NFA is unable to enforce compliance of Fiji National Building Codes to the substandard buildings constructed in settlements and rural areas.
- 3.4 The Committee noted that the NFA has spent substantial amount of funds towards repair and maintenance of their firefighting trucks as some are more than 30 years old.
- 3.5 The Committee noted the NFA's partnership with UNICEF to provide firefighting awareness program in schools.
- 3.6 The Committee noted that as part of the Occupational Health and Safety Compliance, NFA only provides fire safety training, upon the request of the employers.
- 3.7 The Committee noted that the Term Life Insurance Cover for fire fighters is only \$10,000
- 3.8 The Committee noted that NFA continuously struggle in purchasing firefighting equipment's together with acquiring new road rescue operation equipment's.
- 3.9 The Committee noted that fire fighters have not been paid overtime and their meal allowance were under paid.
- 3.10 The Committee noted that the current housing allowance for fire fighters is not enough to cater for their accommodation cost.
- 3.11 The Committee noted that some fire stations don't have twin cab vehicles to conduct awareness and they are currently using the fire trucks for outreach programs.
- 3.12 The Committee noted that there was no maintenance work carried out in some of the NFA Fire stations.
- 3.13 The Committee noted that all NFA fire stations don't have a rescue / specialized fire boat to conduct rescue operation during natural disasters or fires on vessels.

4.0 Recommendations

The Committee recommends the following

- 4.1 The Committee recommends that the legislation governing NFA must be reviewed and more fire stations be strategically built. This is to ensure NFA provides services to the people leaving outside the municipal boundaries.
- 4.2 The Committee recommends that the Government must increase NFA's operational funding to cater for the expanded fire services in rural or outside its legal boundaries.
- 4.3 The Committee recommends that an urgent review of the National Fire Services Act to give NFA powers to enforce compliance and ensure people living in rural areas are covered under the Fiji National Building Code.
- 4.4 The Committee recommends that the NFA must purchase brand new firefighting trucks to replace the aging truck issues.
- 4.5 The Committee recommends that the NFA consult with Ministry of Education to review the fire safety education program to cater for students in different levels at school.
- 4.6 The Committee recommends that NFA must ensure that employers adhere to the training requirement that is part of the compliance.
- 4.7 The Committee recommends that the Term Life Insurance of \$10,000 for firefighters must be reviewed and increased.
- 4.8 The Committee recommends that NFA procurement process must be streamlined to ensure efficient and timely supply of firefighting equipment's and new road rescue operation equipment's.
- 4.9 The Committee recommends that all pending overtime and meal allowance for firefighters must be paid immediately.
- 4.10 The Committee recommends that the current housing allowance must be reviewed and NFA must consider having barracks at various Fire Stations.
- 4.11 The Committee recommends that NFA must allocate specific vehicles to conduct awareness while fire trucks should only be utilized for fire emergencies.
- 4.12 The Committee recommends that NFA must conduct regular maintenance to their existing fire stations.
- 4.13 The Committee recommends that NFA must acquire rescue / specialized fire boats to conduct rescue operation during natural disasters or fires on vessels.

5.0 Sustainable Development Goals and Gender Analysis

National Fire Authority commitments towards the SDGs.

SDG 9: Industry Innovation and Infrastructure

NFA have commissioned fire stations in Korovou, Nabouwalu, Taveuni and Seaqaqa and have also acquired land in Keyasi, Navakai, Natadola, Korovisilou, Levuka and Dawasamu.

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

New Fire Station in Navua was commissioned in year 2025 while NFA acquired a land in Keyasi, Pacific Harbour, Levuka and Dawasamu. NFA has established Integrated Community Fire Wardens Training to assist communities in fire safety awareness.

SDG 13: Climate Action

NFA worked closely with Fiji Sugar Corporation and Fiji Pine to minimise unwanted fires in these sectors. NFA have partnered with the Queensland Fire & Emergency Department for training of NFA Officers on Urban Search & Rescue and Swift Water Rescue.

Gender Analysis

Gender equality is addressed through internal HR policies and workforce development.

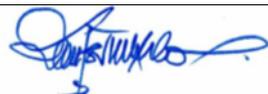
Staff	2016	2017
Male	329	377
Female	17	17

6.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the Committee commends NFA for its continued commitment by providing effective firefighting service to the people of Fiji. The Committee entrust that the recommendations outlined in this report will support the NFA in achieving its objectives by providing more effective service to the people of Fiji.

Committee Members Signature

We, the Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, hereby agree with the contents of this report:

Committee Member	E-Signature
Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu Chairperson	
Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure Deputy Chairperson	
Hon. Alipate Tuicolo Member	
Hon. Viam Pillay Member	
Hon. Parveen Bala Member	
Hon. Alikia Bia Member	
Date: 5th March, 2026	

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-social-affairs/>

[VERBATIM REPORT]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

FIJI NATIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

SUBMITTEE: National Fire Authority

VENUE: Big Committee Room, Parliament

DATE: Tuesday, 27th January, 2026

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM (EAST/WEST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS ON TUESDAY, 27TH JANUARY, 2026 AT 11.08 A.M.

Present

Hon. I.S. Vanawalu	Chairperson
Hon. A. Bia	Member
Hon. A.N. Tuicolo (virtual)	Member
Hon. V. Pillay	Member

Interviewee/Submittee

National Fire Authority

In Attendance:

1) Mr. Joel Israel	Acting CEO
2) Mr. Sen Jeet	Manager Finance
3) Ms. Varanise Tawake	Manager Corporate

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, members of the public, secretariat, dear viewers, ladies and gentlemen, a very good morning to you all and it is a pleasure to welcome you here, especially the viewers watching this public hearing session this morning. At the outset, for information purposes, pursuant to Standing Order 111 of the Standing Order of Parliament, all Committee meetings are to be open to the public. Therefore, please note that this submission is open to the public and the media and is being aired via the *Walesi* platform, streamlined live on parliamentary website and social media 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. However, please be advised that Standing Order 111 in the following circumstances permits for non-disclosure of information and these are:

- 1) national security matters;
- 2) third party confidential information;
- 3) personnel or human resources matters; and
- 4) committee deliberation and the development of committee's recommendation in the report.

It is a Parliamentary meeting and all information gathered is covered under the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act 1965.

Moving forward, please bear in mind that we do not condone slander or libel of any sort and any information brought before this Committee should be based on facts. In terms of protocol of this Committee meeting, please minimise the usage of mobile phones and all mobile phones to be on silent mode while the meeting is in progress. I wish to also remind honourable Members and the guests that all questions to be asked are to be addressed through the Chairperson. I would like the Members of the Committee to introduce themselves now.

(Introduction of Committee Members)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Today the Committee will be hearing submission from the National Fire Authority. This is in relation to the National Fire Authority 2017 Annual Report. Before us, we have representatives from the National Fire Authority (NFA), and I would like to thank them for availing themselves to appear this morning. Due to the essence of time, you may give the responses briefly, and the honourable Members will intervene with their supplementary question during your presentation. I will now invite the officials from NFA to introduce themselves and then begin with the presentation.

(Introduction of officers from NFA)

MR. J. ISRAEL.- Just before I commence on the two-part presentation and the queries that have been sent across, on behalf of the CEO of NFA, I would like to extend the warmest greetings of the happy new year to the Committee from the NFA, its 21 stations and 700-plus staff in wishing the Committee a well deliberation for the year that is before us. We pray for knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and the spirit of excellence to be upon you as you continue with your route to 2026.

Our presentation this morning will be in two parts. One is a brief presentation on the NFA, and the second one will be the questions that have been posted, and I will ask two of my members who will from time-to-time assist in going through the questions and answers this morning.

First, I would like to draw a brief background on the NFA. We are looking at 21 fire stations located around the country: seven stations in the Western Division, five in the Northern Division, and nine stations in the Central/Eastern Division.

The fire appliances across these three divisions, we have 54 - 21 in the Central Division, 21 in the West, 11 in the North, nine of those are currently going through repairs. Total staffing is about 708, 39 of those are corporate services (20 females and 19 males), and 669 career firefighters, with 43 female firefighters and 662 male firefighters. Mr. Chairman, the urban population of Fiji is over half a million (550,000) or equated to 62 percent of Fiji's population, and the ratio per firefighter is 1:777.

When we look at the NFA core roles, we look after eight roles. We look after firefighting, we also look after hazardous materials and rescue, we attend road accident rescues, urban search and rescue, flood water rescue, natural disaster rescue, community education, and emergency ambulance services. Our strategic direction, with our vision, is that communities with effective emergency services. Our mission is to preserve life, property, and the environment through community education, disaster and emergency risk reduction, and dedicated, caring, and efficient quality service. Our values are service excellence, discipline, loyalty and commitment, teamwork, and innovation. Our motto is, we are always ready.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to take us through a table that points us to our strategic plan achievements.

For the update as, in November 2025, as we look across, our Costed Operational Planning (COP) completion rates in, we achieved 71 percent 2020 and 2021, 75 percent in 2021 to 2022, 91 percent in 2022 to 2023, 61 percent in 2023 to 2024, and 68 percent in the financial year 2024 to 2025. That brings us to 73.17 percent achievement for the past five years of COP.

Mr. Chairman, I will take us through a five-year inside and outside boundary fire statistics to-date. As you look at the table, it says outside and inside fires. Fire happening outside of the boundaries, and also fires happening inside the fire boundaries.

From the table, you can notice the hike in fire occurrences outside of the boundary because of many reasons related to policy and also where a majority of the policies are not enforced. The reasons being explained is the hike of fires outside the boundary. When you look at the graph indicating blue, it points to fires inside the boundary because of enforcement of most fire inspections and other requirements that we have implemented as policies and regulations within the past five years.

When we look at the main causes of fire, the electrical is leading with the main cause of fire for the past two years of 2024....

HON. A. BIA.- Sorry to interrupt. For clarification, you mentioned about inside the fire boundary and outside. Just explain a bit on the difference between inside the fire boundary and outside?

MR. J. ISRAEL.- Inside of the boundary is referring to the legislative municipal boundaries that we look after. When it is outside, it is outside of the municipal boundary.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Through you, Mr. Chairman, Acting CEO so you are mandated to look after both - inside the boundary and outside the boundary?

MR. J. ISRAEL.- We are only mandated to look after fires inside the boundary, but we are looking after both at the moment. We are only legislated to look after the fire happening within the boundaries.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, as Acting CEO has said, they are mandated to look after the fires within the municipality boundaries. Yet we see there is a lot of fires outside the boundary where National Fire Authority is still attending, and I must thank them for the services. I also thank the officers for their hard work, but that is one area we as a Committee need to take note because we see a lot of settlements outside the municipal boundaries. They also need the services. And yet, according to the graph, with all the policies in place, the blue graph which you have showed us, apart from all the work being done, we still see an increase in the fires in the municipal boundaries. There is a lot of work that needs to be done as far as awareness and trainings, et cetera, to see a decline on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Acting CEO, let me just add to that. I believe the work that has been done by the NFA is quite huge when you talk about both boundaries. We all understand that you are being mandated only within the municipalities.

We are looking forward in terms of your coverage, do you need to further relook at your legislation so that you are covered in both - inside and outside the boundaries? What I am trying to say is such, when you talk about your budget, if you have the capabilities and if there is a need for your legislation to be reviewed or whatever to cover both areas, see now you are doing other works apart from your core functions and it comes with responsibilities when you talk about lives; we understand that. In long term planning, is the NFA ready to change its legislation to cover both sides inside and outside so that you can promote or top up your budget to cater for the needs of the public? This is just a comment. I hope that you will take that on

board, because the public does not understand that, all they know is if there is a fire, they will report it straightaway. I am talking about the importance of having your budget aligned. It can only happen when you have the budget and the approval from Cabinet to do so.

MR. J. ISRAEL.- Mr. Chairman, for the benefit of the Committee this morning, there is a paper that is about to be tabled in Cabinet where we applied for extension of the boundaries. It is with our Ministry at the moment and we have applied for extension of the boundary for all municipal boundaries across Fiji. We are also taking note of the comments from the Chair this morning.

As part of additional comments from NFA this morning, is that the government is required, if I have to use that, there is a 25 percent that the government offers to NFA in terms of its contribution to its budget on a yearly basis.

MR. S. JEET.- Mr. Chairman, there is a provision in the National Fire Service Act that Government provides 25 percent of the total budget annually. From last year, for the first time we have applied that provision of the Act and we have been receiving 25 percent. As mentioned, the budgetary provision will need to be increased should we provide far and beyond as we are doing at the moment for the boundaries. Yes, we are looking at other means of revenue also and there are few papers that have been put to the Ministry to go to Cabinet for approval which I do not want to pre-empt at this moment, but those Cabinet papers should bring sustainability for NFA to provide the services as mentioned.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, as of now the services have been provided to everyone. The rural communities do not know anything about inside and outside boundaries. As long as there is a fire, they will call National Fire Authority and we have all witnessed that they come and provide the services whether it is a house fire or a farm is on fire and some houses are in danger, they are still there to provide the services which we acknowledge and we thank. As far as the legislation is concerned, it has to be accommodated where everyone is provided the service.

MR. J. ISRAEL.- Mr. Chairman, as we go through the remaining table this morning, the main causes of fire is consistent all throughout the five years, it remains with electrical with 56 in 2024 and we see a rise in the year 2025.

Let me just dwell on this little bit, Mr. Chairman, that there is a push from NFA as far as the passing of some of the policies and regulations pointing into the electrical course. Firstly, we are pushing for the review of the Fiji National Building Code. NFA has been part of that committee putting together elements that we see that it is safe, that can work for the nation of Fiji as a whole and also helping the reduction of this cause because unfortunately the National Building Code does not apply or is not enforced outside the boundary or in the settlements or in the villages. They are only enforced within the legislative boundaries as we had discussed earlier.

With the expansion of the boundaries together with enforcement of this very important document as National Building Code, we will see the reduction of electrical fires caused by electrical means. We are also part of the committee that is looking after the electrical appliances that are coming into the country. We are also part of the standards committee that continue to sculpt its way in getting the new electrical standards across. We are looking at the wiring AS3000: 2018, that is the latest in the standards, not being fully implemented into the code. We are requesting the policy makers and the government to look at passing this legislation and also fortifying the way we look at the public and also reduce the fires that are caused by electrical. Arson and

unattended, they follow suit very closely. There are 21 main causes that are seen across the fire reports that we normally issue, but the main ones are the one that have been highlighted to the Committee this morning.

That is the end of the brief presentation this morning. Now I will ask the Manager Finance to take us through the first five questions and answers before I take it across towards the end.

MR. S. JEET.-

Question 1:

What were the key revenue streams for the National Fire Authority Development during this period and how did they evolve over the years?

Our revenue streams have been:

- fire service levy;
- water levy;
- fire safety compliance certification;
- commercial trainings;
- special services; and
- private fire alarm calls.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- When you look at the importance of how your revenue streams are being allocated, can you inform the honourable Members when you talk about the special service, what are the service providers?

MR. S. JEET.- Mr. Chairman, the special service caters for, just like someone needs cartage of water. For example, we cart water for certain institutions. Special service also requires rescue of pets, cleaning of schools post-disasters, municipalities, towns and cities. These are all part of special services.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Through you Mr. Chairman, can we have more information in regards to fire service levy? Is this only within the municipal boundary? Is this levy charged to the business community?

MR. S. JEET.- Mr. Chairman, this fire service levy is charged on all property owners who insure their properties for peril of fire that fall within the boundaries. They pay a levy of 0.06 percent of the sum insured of that property.

HON. V. PILLAY.- So the properties outside the boundary do not fall under this?

MR. S. JEET.- Yes, it is only within the boundaries.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Another interesting area for us, when you talk about water levy. I believe the public sometimes query about it. Can you give the public some sort of assurance on this water levy?

MR. S. JEET.- Mr. Chairman, this water levy is charged at \$1.50 per quota that Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) provides us. By legislation, Water Authority is supposed to deduct from the consumers \$1.50 per quota and remit to NFA. Whatever consumers are remitting, WAF has the details of those.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Sir. You may go ahead.

MR. S. JEET.-

Question 2:

Can NFA provide insights into the major expenditures and how they contribute to the operational efficiency?

Mr. Chairman, the major components of expenditure are listed as follows:

- salaries;
- motor vehicle and fire machine running costs;
- staff welfare;
- personal protection equipment;
- uniform; and
- general operation and maintenance cost.

Salaries include the normal salaries of our firefighters and support staff, and that includes the allowances and overtime. There are certain allowances, such as driving allowance, operating allowance and housing allowance.

Motor vehicles and fire machine running costs, these are operation and maintenance costs of our machines. This is regarded as a substantial expenditure because most of our fleet are more than 30 years old. Previously, NFA used to get second-hand equipment from Australian and New Zealand counterparts (their fire departments), whilst they are still being used, the parts for those machines are not readily available. To search them across the globe cost us quite substantial, so that is a major expenditure at the moment for us.

NFA for the past few years, has been procuring brand new vehicles, but at the cost of one, we could get about six or seven second-hand. However, again, that second-hand has done its service. It is a bit expensive for us to maintain those.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, through you, in your presentation, Acting CEO, you have mentioned that nine of your vehicles, the fleet, is under repair. Since when were these vehicles under repair and how soon it will be back? Without the vehicles, you will not be able to provide the service if there is a fire. I understand there must be a lot of challenges being faced by NFA, since these nine vehicles are under maintenance.

MR. S. JEET.- Mr. Chairman, these are part of the 54-fleet that we have. We supplement from other stations and these vehicles take about two months to three months, because the parts are brought from abroad, and by the time the parts come in and fitted, it takes a bit of time. We have vehicles to supplement other fire stations. We mobilise vehicles to other stations where there is a need from the fleet.

Staff welfare – we provide medical insurance for our staff and it covers both local and overseas medical coverage.

Personal protective equipment and personal protective gear are very critical and quite expensive for us because all of these items are brought from abroad. When we talk about fire-protecting equipment, this includes building apparatus, the BA suits, the hazard chemical suits, the firefighting hoses, the nozzles, the couplings, the branches, et cetera, which our firefighters use during course of fire.

Personal protective gear is the fire tunics, the fire jacket and the fire pants, plus, we have firefighting boots, firefighting gloves and firefighting helmets. These are quite expensive, and as I have said, it comes from overseas. The only thing we get locally available is this uniform that we are wearing, otherwise, most of these are from abroad.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, through you, Acting CEO, during our last visit to the NFA offices, we were told that they needed some tools, especially when they attend the accidents. Has that has been given out to the stations, or you still facing challenges with that?

MR. S. JEET.- Mr. Chairman, towards the end of last year, we procured three new sets of battery-operated Road Accident Rescue (RAR) equipment, and that has been distributed to the three Divisions. As we speak, we sent a purchase order for another four sets of second-hand equipment. These are quite expensive equipment. One set costs about \$110,000, and the second-hand is the used ones. We are getting it from Australia, and they have refurbished it, and hopefully, within the next two weeks, we will be receiving it. We are trying slowly, we have to get it from abroad, and the exchange rate, as we are all aware, is quite expensive.

Uniforms, when we talk about uniforms, we provide the whole set for our staff. That is starting from the normal uniform, parade uniform, and ceremonial uniforms. They is an attire code, so we have to provide all that for them.

General operation and maintenance cost, this is the station upkeep; supplies and consumables for a station, stationery, and electricity utility bills. These all form part of the general operation and maintenance cost.

Question 3:

What changes in the National Fire Authority’s policies and procedures were implemented during the period, and how did they impact service delivery?

During the period, HR policies and procedures were reviewed, finance policies and procedures were reviewed, and fleet management policies and procedures were reviewed. However, there were no other major changes in the policies and procedures at that point in time. Later on, as the years passed, we made a lot of policy and procedure changes.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, through you, these three changes—HR policies, procedures financial policies and procedures were done during that period under review, under scrutiny, according to this annual report.

MR. S. JEET.- Yes, Sir.

HON. V. PILLAY.- But there were other changes also made after that.

MR. S. JEET.- Yes, Sir.

HON. V. PILLAY.- We will request Acting CEO, if you can also provide the information on the other changes which you have made to the Committee, please.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Acting CEO, what honourable Viam Pillay is trying to say is that whatever question is not available to us now, you can submit to us when you return. It will help us when we finalise our final report to Parliament.

MR. J. ISRAEL.-

Question 4:

Were there any amendments to regulations or policies that directly affected members of the public?

For the year in question, 2017, there were no changes made to the Acts or regulations. But again, there are Acts and regulations changed recently with new ones in the registration of fire agents. Those are still with the Minister. It will be tabled to Cabinet very soon. However, for the year 2017, Mr. Chairman, there was none.

Question 5:

Infrastructure Development - what were the key infrastructure projects or capital projects undertaken in the years 2016 to 2018?

First, we constructed and commissioned the Korolevu Fire Station, the Korovou Fire Station in Tailevu, the Seaqqa Fire Station in the Northern Division, and the Taveuni Fire Station in Taveuni. We also procured two emergency ambulances from Vision Motors and the construction and commission of Savusavu Fire Station that was completed and commissioned on 4th July, 2018.

Question 6:

How did the NFA ensure sustainability in its infrastructure and development plans?

We developed a fleet maintenance programme and also procured and secured land for future development to cover communities. We built a station in Rakiraki, Lami, Nakasi, and in Navua. We are currently working on the construction of the new Natadola Fire Station between Sigatoka and Nadi. And this new fire station will cover our service area between these two towns of Sigatoka and Nadi and the authority has also procured land in Nayavu, Levuka, lands in Pacific Harbour, Keiyasi, Navakai, Tavua, Korovisilou and Dawasamu. Dawasamu has been purchased outright which is marked for the new NFA Academy to be designed and constructed in the not too distant future.

Question 7:

Were there any delays or budget overruns on major projects and what measures were taken to mitigate them?

All operations activities and major projects are covered within the budget provisions, and the close monitoring of budget and work programmes enable us to keep within the budget.

Question 8:

Apart from the media awareness programme by NFA, what were some of the means of public awareness undertaken by NFA for public on fire safety and other areas of operations?

The commercial awareness activities involves delivery of fire safety messages to the various communities in each station area. In partnership with UNICEF, the fire safety education in schools are part of the primary and pre-school curriculum. The pupils workbooks and teachers guides in fire safety for students in pre-school and Years One Two were developed by the Ministry of Education, and it is also introduced as part of the Health Science.

I may add on to this as part of the answers to this question, is that the commercial training actually rolls into a community awareness programmes where we engage with communities. We have rolled out about a couple, with the most recent one in Yako where we institute a fire post and it has been ever since operating since its commissioning. We look forward to commissioning more when the budget is approved, maybe one or two more in this financial year.

At the Age of Vehicle Fleet and other firefighting equipment. In 2017, the average vehicle age for NFA fleets are 18 years old. We have an annexure that we can go through. It explains very deeply the ages and the types of vehicles that we have in our garages in our stations.

Question 9:

Can NFA highlight the current age of service vehicles and firefighting equipment?

Those are also captured in the table. I am not sure, Mr. Chairman, if we have been facilitated this. It is good reading and I would like the Committee to have a good look in how the 30-year-old fleet has been taken care, and also how it has been effectively touching base with fire occurrences within the fire districts.

Question 10:

How well has the NFA achieved all its sustainable development goals?

We look after SDGs9, 11 and 13. SDG9 on industry innovation and infrastructure. We have commissioned fire stations in Korovou, Nabouwalu and Seaqaqa and also we have acquired land in Keiyasi, Navakai, Natadola, Korovisilou, Levuka and the recent one in Dawasamu. SDG11 on sustainable cities and communities. New Navua Fire Station is now in commission, it was planned and similarly we have acquired a land in Keiyasi. NFA has also established integrated community fire wardens training, the one which I had deliberated earlier, the one in Yako. This is to assist communities in responding first before the NFA responds.

That is a fire safety awareness we also have and implemented the framework under the community awareness framework.

The last one is the SG13, NFA's response to climate action. The Authority has been working closely with Fiji Sugar Corporation and Fiji Pine Limited to minimize unwanted fires in these sectors. NFA is also partnered with the Queensland Fire and Emergency Department for training of our offices on urban search and rescue and swift water rescue.

Mr. Chairman, for the benefit of the Committee, NFA just completed a seven-day training on Swift Water Rescue. The next one will be in Cairns in Brisbane in March. We have selected four of our best officers to carry on. That is not the only one. We have the Swift Water Rescue and Urban, Search and Rescue (US&R) where we also have partnered with our Queensland counterparts with the current MOU in place. So, it is an exchange of knowledge through that MOU and more other benefits and conditions under the MOU that we are following very closely.

Question 11:

Gender Equality

I will speak through the table. Unfortunately, there is a technical issue with that, but I will just read from the table in front of me. The career firefighters, the permanent, back in 2026 and 2027, 377 maybe these data I have to read them the other way around.

From January to July of 2026, 329. In 2016 to 2017, 377. The administration and technical staff were permanent and there were 21 in 2026 and 23 in the year 2027. So, the total permanent staff 350 back in January and July of 2016. We have 400 in the financial year of 2016 and 2017.

Our temporary and paid volunteer firefighters 69 of them in the year 2026, we dropped to 53 in 2016 and 2017. It brings the total manpower in those in 2016, 419 and 445 in the years 2016 and 2017.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, through you, Acting CEO, I believe these figures are only up to 2017. We will also need the current data on this if that can be provided to the Committee?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Acting CEO, the request from the honourable Member, if we can have current figures. For us, it is how we look at trends and that will help us in our decision making before we finalise our report to Parliament.

MR. J. ISRAEL.- Mr. Chairman, we will supply the Committee with the figures and the data that is required. That brings me to the last question.

Question 12:

Please explain how well you have performed against the targets of your operational and strategic plans?

Although there were no Strategic Development Plan in 2017, the operations were carried out in accordance with the budget forecast and internal work plans, however, in 2018, NFA secured the service of a consultant that was hired to draft a six-year strategic plan which was viewed, approved, and was implemented in 2020.

That concludes the question and answers and NFA response to the esteemed Committee this morning.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much, Acting CEO. Honourable Members, any further supplementary questions?

HON. V. PILLAY.- Through you Mr. Chairman, Acting CEO, you mentioned about commercial training, like the rural group in Nadi. Whether there are plans to provide this sort of training to the communities all around Fiji, because we always see fires around. We have committees around, like the crime prevention committees and other committees in the communities. How can you capture that and provide them with some basic training so that they are very helpful before NFA arrives during any fire?

MR. J. ISRAEL.- Through you Mr. Chairman, commercial training is basically NFA conducting fire safety training to commercial businesses. When we look at the community awareness framework that we are now implementing, we are open to requests. Since it is one of the revenue streams, we actually offer a fee that we can conduct those trainings with limited numbers that are required, that suit the number of trainers that we have. At present, we are conducting commercial training and also trainings that are requested. We offer under commercial training about five other trainings in safety at work, the firefighter training for hotels that are outside of the business districts. We conduct fire safety at work, heights and confined spaces. Those come under commercial training.

To answer your question, Sir, we are open to those requests. When the request comes, we attend to those. We send out quotations. I can state for the benefit of the Committee today, Mr. Chairman that NFA is actively involved with those requests, and we ensure that we send fire safety inspectors and also the commercial trainers to those locations to conduct the training.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman through you, Acting CEO, whether there is training provided to the workers in big factories, for example, FSC. We saw the fire at Rarawai in Ba, whether NFA provided some sort of training to the workers and whether there was any attempt by these workers to at least control this fire till NFA arrived?

MR. J. ISRAEL.- Mr. Chairman, it is a duty of the employer to request those trainings. We conduct trainings to FSC because the training is part of their compliance. If we have inspections already done but the training has not been conducted, we still hang on to their certificates. Commercial training is part of the fire safety compliance certificate. Without that, an institution or a commercial entity will still be regarded as non-compliant.

With FSC, we conduct training because we will request a number of information from them, if there is an evacuation plan existing, we check all their installations, whether the entire mill is being fitted with the minimum requirements of fire safety installations with fire extinguishers, fire blankets, fire hose rails, et cetera.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, what I am trying to say, if you have all the compliance in the factories and if the workers are not trained, then those are of no use. There will not be any attempt to do something before NFA arrives. It should be a must with all the compliance, there should be training also provided. They are the first ones who will be there to attend to any fire and that can be further controlled till NFA comes in. I think NFA looks into the compliance part, but training is also very important, which, we, as a Committee, can also discuss on.

MR. J. ISRAEL.- Mr. Chairman, I agree with the honourable Member. NFA is always ready to accommodate any request. If there is a request from FSC to conduct those trainings, I believe we have been conducting a number of trainings with them. In light of the recent fire, there is no indication that there was a proper training done. For the information of the Committee, they have their own firefighting wardens who liaise with NFA, we train them and then they train their own people. The way we actually look at it from the outset, there was no system in place for them to fight the fire well before we arrived. I agree with you, Sir.

HON. A. BIA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, Acting CEO and the team, thank you for a very thorough presentation this morning. Just a note on the graph that you have presented in terms of the employees you have – firefighters. In regard to staff empowerment, staff within the administration and firefighters as well, what kind of empowerment do they provide? I know, and to my understanding as well, that fire dynamics do change the situation, changes every year-in-year-out, outside or within the boundary. What kind of empowerment in terms of training and enhancement programme are provided to the administration staff and firefighters out there?

MR. J. ISRAEL.- Mr. Chairman, through you, we have a training department that looks after training, both the career firefighters and the corporate. I agree with you that the need to upgrade the skills, because we only teach our firefighters in the very early days of work when they come through recruitment. One thing is the existing expertise when they join NFA, but they continuously conduct internal training. They have their own syllabus and curriculum that they go through, and that also is tagging to their promotions.

Recently we have identified a majority of the need because NFA is 100 years old in Fiji, it demands a lot of training and expertise to match the current needs internationally. I am saying that we are benchmarking lately with Taiwan with their ambulances. We have sent out first-responders on two weeks and three weeks training to Taiwan. We have talks with the Chinese Embassy and they have indicated a number of trainings that are available to us. We recently completed the swift water rescue and the urban search rescue with Queensland.

It is an ongoing training to upgrade the skills that are not available here locally. We go to heights and lengths to actually accommodate. Because of the budget issues that we have, we are sending only a number to get that information over so we can have that internal certification. As far as empowerment, we have a succession plan in place for corporate. At the moment there are about five actings. Being in NFA, as I can remember, that is the depth that we have at NFA that we can put people in authority, in decision making situations, because the system that has been ongoing for the past six or ten years – that is across both operations and corporate. It is still an opportunity that NFA is looking across to getting more people to be educated, both the corporate, and most importantly in firefighting. Firefighting is an ever-evolving area of service.

Fire continues to bring a lot of other different demands based on the materials of construction and climate change. We are looking at hundreds of miles of forest fire, which is

totally outside the textbooks as far as firefighting is concerned. Most recently, we have a number of high-rises coming in. Even our national building code is chasing the development. That is what the Committee today have firsthand knowledge that the multi-storey buildings we now have, we are chasing the works.

The policies are not in place to properly address this. The NFA is trying to catch up with its capability of getting the right trucks to combat fires. We are hoping that the government partners with the Authority in fortifying our efforts to stop fires in high-rises.

What we are currently doing is to enforce plan vetting. Plan vetting is something the government will put across in the next month or so is the online plan vetting system where we will scrutinise all materials used in construction, working together with architects and engineers and the list goes on. NFA is just the end product, but there are a number of other institutions and agencies needs to work together to actually make NFA do its work.

HON. A. BIA.- Thank you, Acting CEO. I have also noticed that there is a huge challenge in regard to the notification, when a fire happens, notification to NFA. I have seen that a lot of people people tend to put up on their social media first rather than calling NFA or taking the first step to call NFA. We know of some fires that do happen on social media because people fail to call NFA immediately when it happens.

Speaking of our firefighters, sometimes the public shifts the blame to the fire fighters when they arrive late at some places. What sort of protection is there? My worry is, when these firefighters do attend an incident, there are many risks involved. When they walk into a fire, they do not know whether they will make it back alive or no. What sort of protection is there in terms of allowances or threats? What can the government do to ensure that firefighters are protected whenever they go to an incident?

MR. J. ISRAEL.- Mr. Chairman, through you, that is a big question. Thank you for going that deep into asking that question, honourable Member. I will limit my answer to how well prepared are we in terms of equipment. For example, the latest fire in Nakasi. We did not receive the call, but we saw the fire on social media, that is after 10 minutes. What difference would 10 minutes make? When our boys responded, we saw the interview with the lady that they were trying to rescue. We attended, did what we needed to do, managed to douse the flames, but unfortunately we lost two lives.

What would be the difference if the public are well educated and awareness is up in the high? The first they call is 910. The faster we respond to fires, the higher the probability of saving lives and properties. Ten minutes makes a lot of difference, even a delay of two minutes, because we have a responding time of 5 minutes, 10 minutes and 15 minutes.

In your second part of the question, we plead to the government to furnish the National Fire Authority with equipment that can enable us to fight the fire. The demand has gone up, the classifications of buildings in those small areas are double.

I am an architect by profession, and you look at a plot ratio allowed by our local authority, they approved for that portion of buildable area, the difference between having to douse that fire within five minutes with increased fire load because of extension, that is unlawful, that makes the difference at fire loading. People are putting other neighbors in jeopardy and their lives because of overdevelopment in most of our lands in our municipal

boundary and that calls for a harmonising of checklists as far as NFA is concerned and as far as OHS is concerned. It has to be a coordinated effort and not NFA just coming in and see fire loads are real. Some of the public use their premises as storerooms. That actually hike up the fire loads, fire risks endangering themselves and also endangering the people outside of their perimeters.

MR. S. JEET.- Mr. Chairman, the firefighters are paid certain allowances during the course of duty. So these are the fixed allowances they are paid. On top of that, as I mentioned earlier, we provide them insurance package, medical and term life. God forbid it happens that any firefighter gets trapped and perishes during fire, but we have \$10,000 term life plus a funeral benefit for them. That is what we can afford in accordance with our budget at the moment, but hopefully, as Acting CEO has mentioned, if there is more contribution in our budget, we can.

HON. V. PILLAY.- So, one firefighter is insured for \$10,000?

MR. S. JEET.- Yes, \$10,000 term life. But they have a full medical cover for local medical and overseas medical.

HON. A. BIA.- Just lastly, from my end, in terms of rescue work that you do, from NFA point of view, do you think that it is high time that government sets up a national rescue centre? Because I know at times when NFA officers are called, accidents do happen, plane crash sometimes situation happen. There are other incidents that do happen.

Do you think it is high time that the government activates a national rescue centre to look after this? Because when you talk about manpower, NFA, fires do happen but when an incident happens - plane crash or any other incident, usually we have been told to wait for firefighters to come. Do you think that there needs to be a convergence in terms of Police Force, RFMF, Fiji Corrections Service and NFA to contribute, maybe in terms of staffing so that government can activate a national rescue centre to solely look after rescue missions?

MR. J. ISRAEL: Through you, honorable Chairman, thank you very much for your question, honourable Member. At first, the government should first recognise NFA as the first responder above the army or police and then there is an initiative that is currently on board right now. We have visited Adelaide, Brisbane and we have actually borrowed an idea from there which we can formalize as a way forward, we are going to put them as a Disaster Emergency Response National Hub. It is a department within NFA.

Let me just open a few boxes that maybe we are supposed to open to this Committee. We have a project that is coming up, we are working on very closely - a new headquarters for NFA. Also, we are allocating a floor on its own to house the very urgency that you are proposing, honourable Member. We are not only looking for a financial mode, but we are also looking solely at how the Government responds to our request if the Government can facilitate in its financing, it is a 10-storey building up in Komo, we have secured the land for it. We have been after the land for about 25 years and we have just lately secured it and then the talks to develop that, we have architects and structures on board. We are going to build the 10-storey building with government's assistance. As we are here, we do not know that we will be having another chance to sit before this esteemed Committee, I would like to get this on record. We plead that the government just lend a ear to this mammoth task that NFA is gunning to be the first responder, and also to put together a Committee

that will attend to all the requests as far as responding to disaster, not only nationally but also in the region; to be the leading agency.

We have conducted a few trainings with Samoa, that is how NFA is taking this and connecting to Samoa and to the Solomon Islands. They are little bit one or two steps back, unfortunately, we shall be in one voice. If there is an agency that looks after them, not only NDMO, maybe we will be able to lighten the loads a little bit from the national development disaster. Also we have the Meteorological Department, we also will house them within that space to be activated during the disaster and also the relief response.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, just two questions from me. Firstly, when we look at your ratio in terms of your deliverables, if I am right, I need to be corrected – 1:777. How do you look at it when you actually look at how best you can run your operations on that ratio? I believe there will be lot of challenges, but moving forward how will you try to get that ratio down in terms of getting the number from the service that you provide while looking at the number of customers who are out there to be served?

MR. S. JEET.- Mr. Chairman, as we have alluded earlier in our development, NFA has procured lands in several locations and as per government's need, we are building fire stations. As we speak, our Natadola Fire Station which had a big gap from Sigatoka and Nadi will now take care of that portion. We have procured a land in Pacific Harbor. We have land in Keiyasi, Navakai and we are also in the process of acquiring land in Matei, Taveuni and other congested areas with high population. As mentioned by Acting CEO, our response time should be 5 minutes, 10 minutes and 15 minutes. We are also looking at establishing fire posts or substations in areas where there is a high population, the reach may be a bit longer to cater for the first responders to go there and then backup comes in. As he has mentioned, at Komo Park will have a substation there and an Ambulance Bay just to cater for that greater area. We are looking at our reach time from station to the site, minimising by five minutes.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The final one from my end is, in terms of our FDGs? This is now a national issue. Distribution of danger at workplace, when you look at the numbers, I believe the physicality of the work that has to be done, what do you think in terms of gender, especially from the women's perspective to enter the workforce and how best can we accommodate them to bridge the number and bring it down as they say that they can perform all tasks at all levels when you look at FDGs.

MR. J. ISRAEL.- Mr. Chairman, we have an open merit policy for selection. As you can see, there is a growth in the number of females in the force. Not only are we taking on board females, we are also looking at the infrastructure. One thing that I noticed coming into the NFA, there is no female restrooms.

Just recently, we are designing new fire stations that are allocated for female utilities. That is a big change as far as NFA is concerned, knowing that it is a male dominant workforce, now that we are trying to balance. Even as we speak, the number of corporate services is almost 50-50. Most importantly, the infrastructure, for Navua, Lami, and also Nakasi has a separate female dormitory. All females are separate from the males - that is the first of its kind. That is the evolution that has gone into NFA for the past five or ten years. Not only are we getting them on board, we are also providing infrastructure. We are also recognising their contribution to NFA, into the holistic firefighting agenda and also providing safety to people's lives and saving properties.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much to the team from NFA. At this juncture, I wish to sincerely thank you all for availing yourself for this public hearing session. We thank you for your time and hope that you will avail yourself for any further queries that the Committee may have on today's submission.

The Committee adjourned at 12.24 p.m.