Statement by the Supervisor of Elections
Mr Mohammed Saneem

FEO Launches 2018 General Election, Election Officials National Recruitment Drive
Wednesday 05 July 2017
5.30pm

Bula Vinaka Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for joining us.

The Fijian Elections Office will be commencing the recruitment drive for upto 17,000 election officials for the 2018 General Election from the 28th of July this year. This is a major component for election preparation and it is necessary that we start early. Election officials will staff the 2000+ polling stations in Fiji on Election Day.

Historically, Fiji has had 10 General Elections since independence and until 2014, all officials were primarily civil servants.

However, the trend internationally moved towards elections being conducted by ordinary citizens. This trend favours the principle of creating ownership in the election process as well as in the democracy.
In 2014, the Electoral Act allowed the FEO to independently recruit election officials throughout the nation under a national recruitment drive. We received 15,609 applications from Fijians to work in the elections, out of which we recruited approximately 11,000.

These officials were trained by our trainers and they delivered the 2014 General Election and set a standard for elections in future. The officials carried out their roles diligently. Observers and voters commended their performance. We always endeavor to provide excellent customer service as we have done so in the past.

I’d like to quote some of the findings of the observers in the Multi-Observers Group report, and I quote:

(Observers commented very positively on the performance of polling day officials, who in general were very competent and committed in performing their duties. Most polling staff had no experience of the previous election, and were implementing a new electoral procedure. The training of polling staff was generally well organized. Materials for staff – particularly the Presiding Officers’ Operations and Training Manual – were extremely detailed, describing every step at length.

Observers also commended polling staff on their professionalism and flexibility in problem-solving.)
Observer teams witnessed a number of voters requiring assistance, including disabled, elderly, and visually impaired persons. On occasion, polling day workers were also called on to provide assistance. Polling staff and communities should be commended for their efforts to ensure all Fijians had the opportunity to vote.

Many instances were also observed of extraordinary efforts by polling staff to ensure the disabled could cast their ballots, including carrying the people, and bringing ballots and boxes to the voter. (Unquote)

Ladies and gentlemen with all of that as experience in mind, let us now focus on the next GENERAL ELECTION.

Based on our registration figures as at 20th April 2017, we have registered just over 603,557 voters. We will be getting more numbers as the Nationwide Voter Registration Drive concludes this weekend. The Electoral Commission has approved that the maximum number of voters that can be assigned to a polling station is 500.

According to the provisional list of polling venues published on 15th March 2017, there are 409 Polling venues in the Central division, 464 in the western division, 337 in the Northern division and 206 in the Eastern division. Therefore, based on these figures, the FEO anticipates that we will have approximately 2019 polling stations for the next General Election. Actual figures may vary and will be released much closer to the election date.
The Election Officials Recruitment Drive that will begin on 28 July this year is open to ALL registered voters regardless of whether they are currently employed or not. Everyone who is interested - has to apply. If you worked for us in 2014, you will still have to apply. If you are already in employment, your employer may have to give you prior consent to work during the General Election – that will be between the applicant and the employer.

For the 2018 General Election the recruitment of staff will be done on our newly developed Computer Based Testing system which is part of our Election Management System. We will be testing you on your numeracy and literacy skills.

Let me explain how the process will work;

All interested persons must show up at the Recruitment Centre with their required documents. Since only registered voters will be allowed to work, you must take advantage of the current Nationwide Voter Registration Drive and update your details.

We would like you to work in a polling venue nearest to your residence to minimize inconvenience to you and therefore you will have to update your details. The software assigns you to a polling venue nearest you. There will not be any Voter Registration booths at these recruitment centres.
At the recruitment centre, applicants will be required to collect a username and password from the Recruitment Assistant in order to access the system. Applicants will then be directed to a laptop, which they will use to fill out the Application form. This should not take more than 15 minutes.

Every applicant will be required to undertake the Literacy and Numeracy Test containing 20 questions and you will have 30 minutes to attempt these tests.

At the end of the test, the system will print out your Application Form and other necessary documents, which must be handed to the Recruitment Assistant. All employees of the Fijian Elections Office must sign a Declaration of political neutrality.

Applicants will be then given an Acknowledgement letter with your unique reference number that will be used for all future correspondence. One of the key mechanisms for correspondence with applicants is through SMS or text messaging and therefore it is essential that at the time of completing the application, personal mobile numbers are correctly entered. Please try and avoid crowding the FEO Offices around the country to enquire about your recruitment details as this will be available on the website and other platforms such as social media platforms.

Mostly, please wait for the SMS notification for the next step in the process.

This time, each applicant will do their own data entry and care must be taken to enter details correctly. We had noted from 2014 recruitment process that
some people tried to sit the test more than once. This time, the software will not accept repeat attempts. You can only apply once.

We are not going to test you based on your knowledge of elections nor the number of years of experience you may have had in elections. We do not want you to bring a CV to the recruitment centre, we only need you to bring your VoterCard, and copies of your FNPF card, TIN letter, or Joint card and details of your current bank account.

The Fijian Elections Office is an open merit based, equal opportunity employer and all appointments will be made based on your performance in the test as well as the trainings that follow.

We believe that every Fijian has a role to play not only as a voter but in other aspects of elections. Elections need to become a part of life as we mature into electoral democracy that we have. Elections as a concept for choosing the government must become part and parcel of ordinary daily life. Working in elections is one way to promote this participatory approach.

Ladies and gentlemen, I will now briefly outline the logistics plan for the recruitment drive. Recruitment will start on 28 July at the Kshatriya Hall in Suva from 9am to 5pm only.

Thereafter for all the 4 divisions, recruitment centres will open from the 01 August 2017. We will advertise details of these venues in the daily newspapers as well as on our FEO channels.
Let me point out that we will not be conducting recruitment in which have been assigned for pre-poll. The FEO has planned to recruit and deploy pre-poll teams from the urban areas to ensure that the logistical exercise is easier to deal with.

To ensure that we get election officials with the highest levels of commitment, energy, honesty and integrity, the FEO has worked out an attractive salary package. This includes payment for attending the training sessions as well as work you do on Election Day.

The following positions are available:

Presiding Officers
Paid $410.00 as a package for the work they will do.
Key duties: Briefing and managing staff and resources. Setting up Polling Station in accordance with the FEO manuals. Updating, signing for, and securing storage of all election records/sensitive voting materials. Managing the polling station during polling as well as assisting voters that need assistance. Manage the count of ballot papers. Transmitting results to the Count and results Centre. Close of Polling Station to return all materials to Fijian Elections Office.

Assistant Presiding Officer
Paid a package of $320.00.
Duties of Assistant Presiding Officer include: To support the Presiding Officer when the Presiding Officer is assisting a voter. If required, to deputize the
Presiding Officer in his absence. Manage the flow of voters. Respond to queries, assist in the setting up and the closure of the polling station.

Polling Day Workers for the next election will be paid a Package Rate of $180.00

Key Duties of Polling Day Workers: These workers on a rotational basis, may handle any or all of the following: Inspect voters fingers for ink; find voters name on the voter Roll – have it signed and marked off; issue Ballot Paper; give voter the appropriate instructions; Ink the finger of the voter; Act as ballot box guard or assist the PO and APO during counting and packing of materials or closing of polling station.

There are some larger venues in Fiji which have to 2500 to 3000 voters. Many of these venues will need someone to assist and guide them to their respective polling stations, there the FEO will recruit VQCs:

Venue Queue Controller
Paid a package of $166.00 for work they will do. This will include the overall logistics management for the polling venue. Provide all assistance necessary to Presiding Officers on queries, complaints, voter flow and provision of materials. Manage voter flow. Provide voting assistance include assisting persons with disabilities. Maintain contact with Area and Divisional Offices with updates on progress and any other particular issues.
There are other positions available, such as pre-poll staffing, counting staff as well as civic educators which will be advertised in the daily newspapers, as well as on our website and facebook pages.

We are committed to ensuring that polling is convenient for voters – walk into a polling venue, wait for your turn to cast your vote and once this is done, leave satisfied that the entire process was handled efficiently and did not leave you frustrated.

Election Officials who want to join us, will have to demonstrate the highest degree of professionalism, patience, courtesy and then after trainings, sound knowledge of the electoral processes that they have to implement.

Please bring excellent customer services as a trade when you come to apply.

This Recruitment Drive ladies and gentlemen, will be led by the Fijian Elections Office’s Director Corporate Services Mr. Sanjeshwar Ram and his team. Mr. Ram and his team will look after the recruitment, training, contracting as well as the logistical operations around the recruitment of polling day workers.

Now to interactions on our social media platforms, we have noted that there is a high level of interest in joining the 2018 Election team. This is very encouraging and today we have released to all interested parties how to apply, when to apply and where to apply. It is now on individuals to ensure that they follow the procedures, get their details updated on the voter cards as well as
get the necessary documents so when they come to the Recruitment Centre they are able to complete the assessments correctly and successfully.

The details of the National Recruitment will be published in the newspapers and will be posted to the FEO website [www.fijielects2018.org.fj/eofficials](http://www.fijielects2018.org.fj/eofficials) and on the Fijian Elections Office Facebook pages.

We have also set up a dedicated helpline 1501 for any queries that potential recruits may have. This helpline will be activated from 28 July, 2017 and will be operational from 8am to 5pm only.

With these words ladies and gentlemen, I’d like to thank you for joining us this evening. Before I conclude, I’d like to say that the FEO’s firm belief is that the Elections belong to the people of Fiji and they should be allowed to take ownership of the process by participating and getting involved.

I’d like to thank anybody who has interest in joining the team for the 2018 General Election and I wish you all the best.

Thank you and Vinaka Vakalevu.