



LAVETIVITI

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FEO Launches Voter Turnout & Survey Reports

The 2018 General Election Voter Turnout and Survey Report is the country's inaugural research on Voter Turnout and was published in January this year.

For the first time in Fiji, voter turnout analysis was conducted following a general election and it was only pertinent to follow it up with a voter survey to determine the general perception and behaviour of Fijian voters.

The Voter Turnout Report was generated directly from the Voter Lists of each Polling Station from the 2018 General Election. All the Voter Lists were scanned and the turnout records digitized. This allowed the Fijian Elections Office **["FEO"]** to conduct numerous data analyses to understand the possible trends in Fiji's voting environment.

Following this exercise, a nationwide voter survey was conducted last year which delved into the background of Fijian voters, their behaviour patterns, their expectations on election timelines and their experiences from the 2018 General Election operations. A total of 14,137 voters participated in the survey.

The Voter Survey Report broadly explains the general voter tendencies in Fiji. The Reports present an opportunity for deeper research and investigation into the Fijian voter perception and behaviour and at the same time, create a pathway for development of voter theories that are more contextually relevant and responsive to the electoral climate in Fiji.

FEO Adopts New Reporting Mechanism



The Electoral Commission presented its 2020 Annual Report to His Excellency The President, Major-General (Ret'd) Jioji Konrote in February

The Electoral Commission's Annual Report to the Parliament included for the first time, the FEO's Annual Report and this is set to become the norm every year.

Prior to 2020 all of the FEO activities were religiously reported to the Electoral Commission during its meetings. However, the FEO has adopted a new reporting process on its activities in the way of an Annual Report which would be submitted to Parliament.

Supervisor of Elections Mr Mohammed Saneem said during the FEO's strategic planning exercise held earlier in the year; it was noted that the FEO activities, on an annual basis, can be reported to Parliament and the best machinery for this reporting would be through the annual report of the Commission.

"In terms of advancing the transparency of its operations, the FEO will continue to provide an annual report to the Commission for publication purposes while reports on operational activities will continue to be provided on a quarterly basis," Mr Saneem explained.

The Commission's Annual Report also included the 2018 General Election Voter Turnout and Survey Reports.

Commission to Review Number of Seats in Parliament

The Electoral Commission, in accordance with Section 54 of the Constitution will be reviewing the total number of seats for the 2022 General Election.

Chairperson of the Commission Mr Suresh Chandra highlighted this during the Commission's first meeting with registered political parties in January. Mr Chandra said the Commission anticipated the review process to take place in June of this year.

"The Commission will also be conducting the ball draw to determine the first number of the 2022 General Election ballot paper," Mr Chandra said. "We have decided that this draw will be conducted straight after the determination of seats for the next General Election."

26 May 2022 is the earliest possible date on which the Writ for the 2022 General Election can be issued and should this happen, the first possible election date will then be 9 July 2022.

Increase in Number of Voters per Polling Station

The Electoral Commission approved an increase in the number of voters per polling station from 500 to 650 during its February meeting.

The FEO had adopted the 500 per polling station limit in 2014 and continued to use it in 2018. However, it was noted that the number of registered voters had increased by 50,000 since 2014 and based on this increase the FEO had recommended the change to the Commission.

Commission Chairperson Mr Suresh Chandra explained that in Fiji each polling venue could have several polling stations.

“What we have done is increased the number of voters that will vote at a polling station,” Mr Chandra said. “This does not change a person’s polling venue. So if someone had voted at a particular school in the last general election and if that school is still functional and the buildings are intact, they will be voting at the very same school. The only thing is that the number of polling stations inside the school have changed. Maybe reduced by one (1) because the number of voters have increased inside the polling station from 500 to 650.” Based on the new 650 limit, the FEO will now cater 1,926 Polling Stations in the next General Election.



Consultations with Political Parties



The Registrar of Political Parties Mr Mohammed Saneem met with political party representatives in February regarding the development of a guideline for audit of political parties accounts.

The Registrar had the opportunity to highlight various discrepancies found in the accounts of registered political parties and presented the provisions of the laws to highlight the compliance requirements.

“This was the very first meeting of this nature that we have had with political parties and the general agreement is that such a guideline is very much needed and that the parties together with the FEO will contribute towards the development of this framework,” the Registrar said. Electoral Commissioner Mr Jawahar Lal who is a chartered accountant by profession, also joined the meeting and offered his expert advice to political parties on financial reporting.

The FEO in the meantime will continue to work on identifying the various checklist requirements that auditors need to present when they audit the accounts of political parties. The Fiji Institute of Accountants has also been approached to assist in this exercise.

Know Your Election Quiz Garners Interest

The winner of the Know Your Election [“KYE”] Quiz 1, Shahenoor Ali, commended the FEO’s latest initiative to engage with voters saying the online quiz has broadened her knowledge of elections in Fiji.

Shahenoor who had participated with her brother Tanzeel Ali, won \$250 cash as first prize. The duo had participated in the FEO’s International Day of Democracy Quiz in 2020 and won third prize so with enough hard work and persistence they managed to win this time around with a score of 86.7%.

“As opposed to the last time, we learnt the rules rigorously and were more confident in doing the quiz,” Shahenoor said. “A lot of research was done in advance and the information that was available online especially on the FEO website was really helpful. Engaging in these quizzes have made us more aware of election system and its history,” she added.



From Left: Quiz winners Tanzeel and Shahenoor Ali with SoE and Quiz organiser Neelam Prasad

The FEO announced the roll out of the KYE Quiz, a series of online quiz competitions designed to engage and educate voters on elections in February. The first quiz in the series was held on 11 February 2020 and saw 285 teams register to take part.

Supervisor of Elections Mr Mohammed Saneem said the FEO had noted great success of its IDD quiz competition and as such decided to take things a notch higher and hold a series of such competitions to engage with voters. “We’re all excited at the FEO about this initiative as we intend to grow our engagement with our stakeholders particularly those who are in the 18-30 age group,” Mr Saneem said.

Participants had formed teams of two (2) and attempted the online quiz which covered questions on voter turnout in 2018, seat allocation, the latest voter statistics and questions relating to the legal framework on elections in Fiji among other topics.

Fifth place winner Rahul Dutt said: “I would like to thank the FEO team for coming up with such an interesting initiative to create awareness on the laws governing election activities and also the roles and responsibilities of FEO as an independent body to carry out free and fair elections in Fiji. I thank and congratulate the team for this initiative.”

Submissions made on Electoral Amendment Bills



The FEO as well as the Electoral Commission made their submissions on the Electoral Amendment Bills 2020 to the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights.

There are 56 clauses in total to be amended before Parliament. This includes 11 clauses in the Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act, 2012, 31 clauses in the Electoral Act, 2014, and 14 clauses in the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act, 2013.







Supervisor of Elections Mr Mohammed Saneem said in its review of the electoral processes after the 2018 General Election, the FEO identified that in order to deliver more effective election operations, the existing laws outlining the procedures needed to be streamlined.

Mr Saneem said Parliament had amended the laws previously in 2017 in line for the 2018 General Election. "It is indeed very positive that Parliament is once again considering further amendments following

the experience in 2018 for the 2022 General Election. Internationally, it is always regarded as good practice for Parliament to review and approve laws for the General Election well in advance of the date," he added.

Introduction of Party Symbols on Voter Instruction Booklet

National Candidates List			
508		Nand, Joseph Nitya	
509		Vukitu, Solomone	
510		Tasoqosoqo, Vilimaina	
511		Sivan, Shanal	
512		Waqainabete, Ifereimi	
513		Dunn, Anne Christine	

An amendment to the Electoral Act, 2014 will see the introduction of Party symbols in the Voter Instruction Booklet ["VIB"] that every voter receives inside the polling station.

The proposed amendment to Section 36 (6) of the Electoral Act, 2014 will allow the National Candidates List to include party Name or Party Symbol or any other information as approved by the Supervisor of Elections.

The amendment was proposed following a recommendation by the Multinational Observer Group in 2018 for the removal of restrictions on party identification in official election material.

After the amendments are passed by Parliament, every voter that enters the polling station will receive a VIB that will have a list of all the candidates by their number, political party symbols, name and photo.

USP Students Develop Customized Software for FEO

The FEO has always endeavoured to provide opportunities for students to have direct exposure in FEO activities, says Supervisor of ElectMr Mohammed Saneem.

He made the remarks during the commissioning of the Inventory and Assets Management System, a customised inventory and asset management software that was developed by a team of students from the University of the South Pacific ["USP"] in conjunction with FEO developers.

USP students Naval Kumar, Dilashna Naresh, Filimoni Naisua and Silio Vukicakaudrove had started the development of the software as part of their final year project and were re-engaged by the FEO after the end of their semester to further enhance and deliver the final version.

The software has been customized to manage the FEO warehouse. The development team officially handed over the software to the SoE in February.



Social Corner

As part of its corporate social responsibility, the FEO team came together to plant 3,000 mangrove seedlings at the foreshore in Lami in early March. FEO Director Corporate Services Mr Sanjeshwar Ram said it was an opportunity for the FEO to do something for the environment and the local community, adding that the organisation intends to organize similar efforts in future as well.



Photo Gallery...

The team commemorated FEO's 7th anniversary, Holi and Easter with a celebration in March.



2020 National Register of Voters Statistics

Total
Registered
Voters

2020 - 650,081

CENTRAL
DIVISION

274,030

EASTERN
DIVISION

25,431

NORTHERN
DIVISION

96,147

WESTERN
DIVISION

246,606

OVERSEAS
VOTERS

7,867

Data as at 31 December, 2020

2022



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