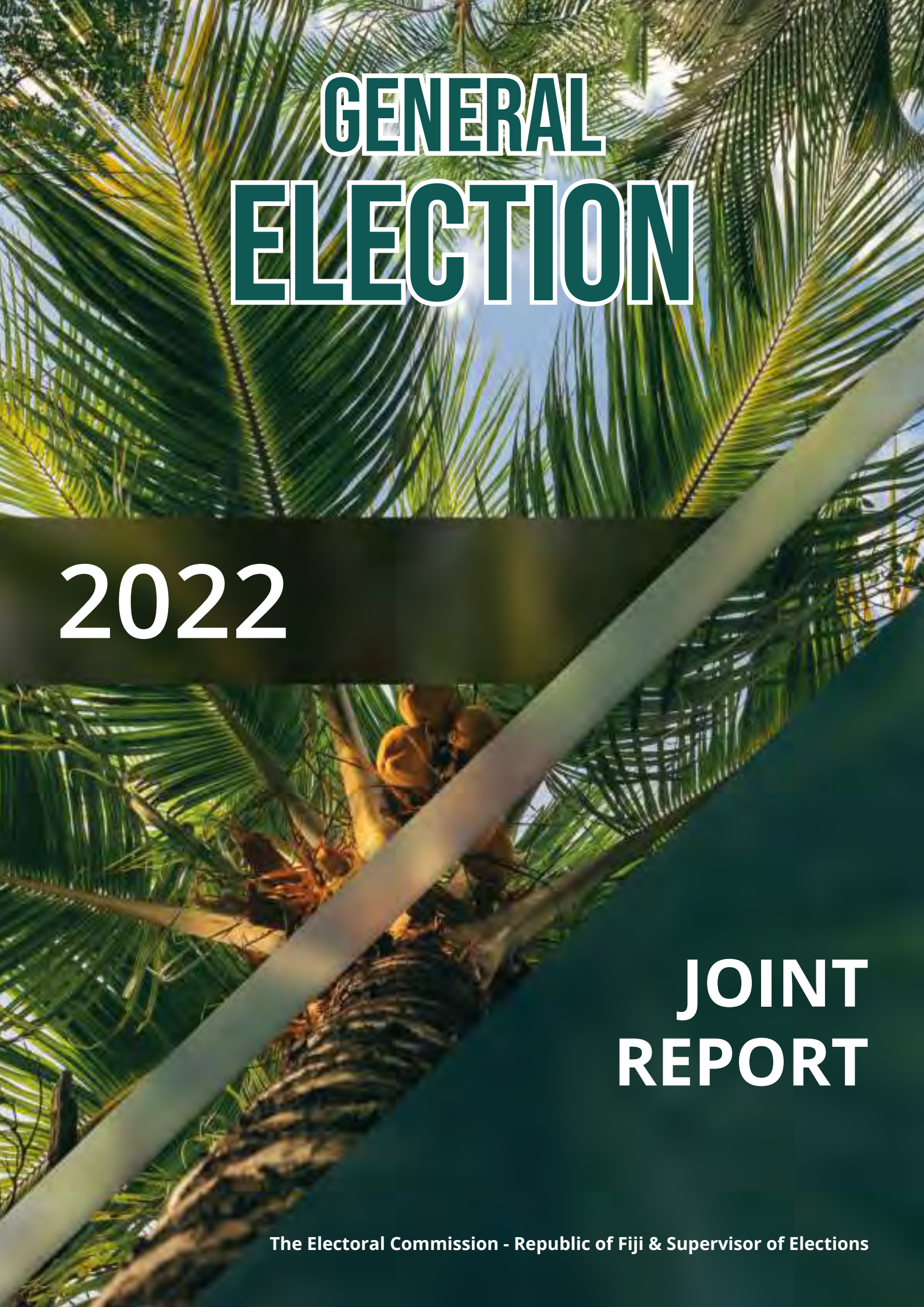




GENERAL ELECTION

2022

**JOINT
REPORT**

The Electoral Commission - Republic of Fiji & Supervisor of Elections

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Foreword

In accordance with Section 14(g) of the Electoral Act 2014 [“Act”], we hereby present this joint report on the 2022 General Election.

On 14 December 2022, the Electoral Commission [“EC”] and the Fijian Elections Office [“FEO”] conducted the 2022 General Election, with a total of 473,910 voters casting their vote. Provisional results were published by the FEO on election night as the counting process progressed at polling stations, while the official and final results were issued on 18 December 2022. The overall turnout for the 2022 General Election was 68.3%, representing 473,910 out of 693,915 registered voters.

Nine (9) Political Parties and two (2) Independent candidates participated in the General Election, with a total of 343 candidates competing for the 55 seats in the Parliament.

This Joint Report highlights the EC’s election activities and the shared responsibilities of the EC and the FEO, and overviews how the 2022 General Election was conducted. The operational aspects of the election, along with details of the FEO’s activities, were outlined in the report of the Acting Supervisor of Elections on 15 March 2022. Additionally, this report includes the annexed Report by the Multinational Observer Group on the 2022 General Election in Fiji.

Once again, we extend our gratitude to the Fijian Government, the international community, local stakeholders, FEO staff and the voters for a combined effort in ensuring the success of this election.



.....
Barbara Malimali
Chairperson
The Electoral Commission



.....
Ana Mataciwa
Acting Supervisor of Elections
Fijian Elections Office

Introduction

The Electoral Commission

The EC is an independent constitutional office, as set out in the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji 2013 [**“Constitution”**] and Section 4 of the Electoral Act 2014 [**“Act”**].

Pursuant to Section 75(6) of the Constitution, the EC consists of a chairperson and six (6) other members. However, at the beginning of 2022, the EC consisted of five (5) Members. On 24 February 2022, in accordance with Section 75(7) of the Constitution, the President, on the advice of the Constitutional Offices Commission appointed Mr. Mukesh Nand as chairperson and Ms. Ateca Ledua as EC Member. Ms. Ledua replaced Ms. Mere Roden who resigned on 23 February 2022. Mr. Simione Naiduki also resigned as an EC Member on 04 October 2022, and that seat remained vacant. For the conduct of the 2022 General Election, the EC consisted of the following members before the terms expired for four (4) members on 20 March 2023:

Mr. Mukesh Nand, Chairperson
 Ms. Ateca Ledua, Member
 Ms. Margot Marie Jenkins, Member (term expired)
 Ms. Selina Lee Wah, Member (term expired)
 Ms. Kavita Raniga, Member (term expired)
 Mr. Jawahar Lal, Member (term expired)

The EC’s responsibilities, as set out in Section 75(2) of the Constitution and Section 3 of the Act, are the registration of voters and the conduct of free and fair elections in accordance with the written law governing elections and any other relevant law. This also includes voter education, registration of political parties and of candidates for elections, the determination of the number of seats in Parliament, the declaration of election results and allocation of seats in Parliament, the settlement of electoral disputes excluding election petitions, and monitoring and enforcing compliance with any written law.

The 2022 General Election was the third Election under the Constitution. In preparation for the General Election, the EC worked closely with the FEO to deliver the election by monitoring and enforcing compliance in accordance with the law.

The EC received support from Australia, India, New Zealand and the United Kingdom in preparation for the 2022 General Election. EC records indicate that the EC conducted a two-day workshop during the period from the issue of the Writ to the Return of the Writ in preparation for the Election. At the end of the workshop, the EC developed a 50 days Writ-to-Writ timeline that particularised the activities that were undertaken by the EC during that period of the General Election.

During the Writ period, the EC held “Election Mode” meetings to discuss preparations and progress, and to obtain updates from the former Supervisor of Elections [**“SoE”**]. The EC also visited polling venues during the pre-poll period and on polling day, to monitor compliance with the electoral laws.

Overall, former members of the EC implemented the 50-day Writ period plan and were able to carry out the EC’s duties in accordance with the law.

For completeness, we report that on 22 June 2023, Mr. Mukesh Nand resigned as Chairperson of the EC leaving Ms. Ateca Ledua as the only remaining member. Between then and August 2023 a new Chairperson and five (5) additional members were appointed, with the newly constituted EC consisting of Ms. Barbara Malimali as Chairperson and six (6) other members: Dr. Atu Emberson-Bain, Mr. Reginald Jokhan, Ms. Ateca Ledua, Ratu Inoke Dokonivalu Loganimoce, Mr. Nemani Mati, and Ms. Nalini Singh. This report was completed by the currently constituted EC.

The Fijian Elections Office

The FEO is an independent office in accordance with Section 9 of the Act. The SoE is the head of the FEO.

To this end, the SoE is responsible for recruitment and hiring of management and other staff to ensure that the FEO is able to perform its responsibility in accordance with the law. The FEO ensured it had employed sufficient staff for the 2022 General Election. This included the pre-poll and polling day workers.

Prior to the 2022 General Election, the FEO held workshops and meetings with stakeholders to map out the electoral process. The FEO received support from international stakeholders for the 2022 General Election and, during the 2022 General Election cycle, the FEO also received technical support from the Australian Electoral Commission and New Zealand Electoral Commission.

For completeness, we report that on 31 January 2023, Mr Mohamed Saneem resigned as SoE and, shortly thereafter, Ms Ana Mataciwa was appointed as Acting SoE.

The 2022 General Election Report from the Acting Supervisor of Elections is annexed in “Annex 6”.

Multinational Observer Group

In accordance with Section 119 of the Act, the Multinational Observer Group [“**MOG**”] was appointed by the Minister Responsible for Elections, Mr. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum. On 18 October 2022, Terms of Reference were entered into between the Government of the Republic of Fiji and the MOG. The Co-leads for the MOG were Australia, India and Indonesia.

The MOG observers traveled widely around the country to observe the electoral process from the Issue of the Writ to the Return of the Writ. The MOG also had consultations with the relevant stakeholders.

The MOG released their final report in March 2023. A copy of the report is annexed in “Annex 7”. Our joint EC and FEO response to the MOG’s recommendations is set out in Part XI of this Report.

2022 General Election

Issuance of Writ

The Writ for the 2022 General Election was issued by the President of the Republic of Fiji, His Excellency, Ratu Wiliame Katonivere to the Chairperson of the EC, Mr Mukesh Nand at 10:00 am on 31 October 2022 at the State House. The Writ received is annexed in “Annex 1”. The nominations process commenced with the issue of the Writ and closed at 12:00 pm on 14 November 2022.

Objections

At the close of nominations, the objections process opened and was managed by the EC. This process allowed voters to raise objections against the nomination of any candidate on the grounds of not meeting the candidate criteria set out in the law. The objection period closed at 4:00 pm on 15 November 2022, and the EC was required to make a decision within three (3) days of receiving the objection.

Two (2) objections to candidate nominations were received and the details are as follows:

Table 1 Summary of Objections to Candidate Nominations Received

No.	Candidate	Party	Objector	Party/Other	EC Decision
001/22	Alvick Avhikrit Maharaj	FijiFirst	Sundar Singh	Private	Dismissed
002/22	Jone Usamate	FijiFirst	Sundar Singh	Private	Dismissed

Appeals

Appeals to the EC were received from candidates whose nominations were rejected by the SoE. The appeal period closed at 4:00 pm on 15 November 2022, and the EC was required to make a decision within three (3) days of receiving the appeal.

There were ten (10) appeals received, and the details are as follows:

Table 2 Summary of Appeals Received

No	Candidate	Party	EC Decision
A01/22	Amjad Ali	The People's Alliance	Dismissed
A02/22	Bulivou Sigatabu Ratu	Social Democratic Liberal Party	Dismissed
A03/22	Hajarat Ali	Social Democratic Liberal Party	Dismissed
A04/22	Ratu Ifereimi Buaserau Camaisau	Unity Fiji	Dismissed
A05/22	Seremaia Tui	Social Democratic Liberal Party	Dismissed
A06/22	Salaciel Taubera Gasara	Unity Fiji	Dismissed
A07/22	Maraia Korina Marama Waibuta	Unity Fiji	Dismissed
A08/22	Naomi Navoce	Unity Fiji	Dismissed
A09/22	Vetaia Vuinakelo	Unity Fiji	Dismissed
A10/22	Mohammed Rieaz Khan	Unity Fiji	Upheld

National Candidates List Draw

On 15 July 2021, the EC conducted a barrel draw on live television and approved 173 as the first number on the ballot paper for the 2022 General Election. There were 343 approved candidates for the 2022 General Election.

The National Candidate List Draw was held on 16 November 2022 at the Suva Civic Auditorium. The draw was conducted in the presence of the public, including members of the diplomatic Corp, media, international observers,

and political parties. The draw was aired live on both FBC and Fiji One television, and also social media.

There were 343 white ping pong balls used in the draw (equal to the number of candidates whose nominations were accepted), which were numbered from 173 to 515 and placed inside a specially designed barrel. The EC checked the balls before the draw was conducted. Section 36 of the Act requires the candidates' names to be announced in alphabetical order with the last name of the candidate appearing before their first name. The number drawn was called out for the announced candidate name, and this was projected onto the large screen at the Civic Auditorium.

The EC was present at the venue to observe the entire process of the candidate list draw, and also received a copy of the National Candidates List from the FEO.

Other EC Activities for the 2022 General Election

In monitoring the conduct of the election, the EC observed a range of processes such as: the printing of ballot papers and the delivery of the first batch of ballot papers from the Printery to the FEO Warehouse; a demonstration of storage of ballot papers in secure places; and the Postal Voting Processing Centre. These activities were carried out on 17 November 2022.

Additionally, on 27 November 2022, the EC again visited the FEO Warehouse and observed the packing of Pre-Poll ballot boxes. On 03 December 2022, the EC attended a demonstration of the packing of sensitive materials for polling day.

All these activities were conducted in the presence of MOG observers, political party agents and the media, and were screened live on the FEO facebook page.

Postal Voting

The postal voting process was administered by the FEO. Postal Voting is a method of voting that allowed voters residing overseas and those who could not attend a polling station to cast their vote via the postal process. Voters were able to apply for Postal Voting from 30 October 2022 until 5:00 pm on 23 November 2022.

In accordance with section 70 (5) of the Act 2014, postal voting applicants rejected by the SoE were entitled to appeal to the EC, within one (1) day of receipt of the rejection. The EC was required to issue its decision on the appeal within one (1) day of receiving it.

The EC did not receive any appeals on postal voting for the 2022 General Election.

Pre-Poll Voting

The final list of polling venues and polling times for the 2022 General Election were approved, published and gazetted on 16 November and 19 November 2022 respectively by the EC. Pre-poll voting was scheduled between 05 to 09 December 2022.

On 05 December 2022, the EC launched the commencement of pre-poll voting at the Nasele Community Hall polling station, at Naitasiri. The members of the EC then individually observed voting at various Pre-Poll venues from Tuesday 06 December 2022 to 09 December 2022, including venues in the Central, Western and Northern Divisions.

Pre-Poll Voting was conducted at 613 venues for 77,907 registered voters with 109 venues in the Central Division, 175 venues in the Western Division, 140 venues in the Northern Division and 189 venues in the Eastern Division.

Polling Day and Counting

Polling took place on 14 December 2022. The members of the EC went individually to observe at various polling stations throughout Fiji, except for the Eastern division, which had been largely covered by Pre-Poll.

The majority of the polling stations opened at 7:30 am and closed at 6.00 pm before counting began. Polling Agents and MOG representatives were permitted into the polling stations to observe the polling and counting

processes. The FEO ensured that the maximum number of voters at any polling station was 650, with voters assigned to a polling station closest to their residential address.

The National Count Centre was set up at the Vodafone Arena. The setup provided sufficient area for the construction of counting cubicles for the 100 counting teams and ample space for storage areas. All pre-poll voting and postal ballots were counted at the National Count Centre. As officially announced by the EC Chairperson, the counting commenced at 6:00 pm on 14 December 2022 and it continued until 15 December 2022. All EC members were present to observe the counting process.

All votes cast on Election Day were counted at the respective polling stations. The results from each polling station were posted at the polling station before sending the original copy of Protocol of Results to the National Results Centre.

All counting was undertaken in the presence of polling agents, international observers and police officers, and the EC members were present for some of the count.

All sensitive election materials collected on 14 December 2022 were securely stored at the FEO warehouse in Suva by 17 December 2022.

The presence of police officers at all polling stations during the delivery and collection of election materials demonstrated to the general public that the process was secure and safe at all times.

The turnout for the 2022 General Election was 473,910 out of 693,915 registered voters, representing a turnout of 68.30%. The total number of invalid votes was 3,326 out of the total votes 473,910, amounting to 0.70%.

The 2022 General Election took place on the 14 of December in a peaceful and conducive environment.

Anomaly in the Results Process

On 14 December 2022, the FEO encountered an anomaly with the FEO Results App during the release of the results, where the App ceased functioning and, when it returned after several hours, there appeared to be inconsistent results. The EC was briefed regarding the anomaly by the former SoE. Following this anomaly with the FEO Result App, the EC received complaints from a number of individuals via the EC complaints portal. The complainants sought manual counting of the votes for the 2022 General Election. As a result, the EC did a media release on 16 December 2022 to clarify that the FEO Results App is not used to count votes but is used to upload the data after the votes have been manually counted and the Protocol of Results is entered in the Result Management Information System (RMIS).

We look forward to the findings of the Final Report of the external audit that was subsequently commenced.

Final National Results Tally, Allocation of Seats and Declaration of Results

In accordance with Section 103 of the Act, the EC received the Final National Results Tally from the former SoE on 18 December 2022. Pursuant to Section 104 of the Act, upon receipt of the Final National Results Tally, the EC proceeded to work on the allocation of seats. After the completion of the Candidate Allocation Form, the form was displayed at the reception notice board. The Allocation of Seats is annexed in “Annex 3”.

On 19 December 2022, the EC held a press conference to publicly declare the candidates that were elected as members of Parliament. The EC gazetted the names of the elected members of Parliament on the same day, and the list of names was forwarded to the Secretary-General of Parliament. The EC also published the declaration of results in the daily newspapers.

Return of Writ

After endorsing the names of the elected members on the Writ on 19 December 2022 at 2:00 pm the EC returned the Writ to His Excellency the President, Ratu Wiliame Maivalili Katonivere. A copy of the returned Writ is annexed in “Annex 4”.

EC Internal Meetings

EC records indicate that the EC met 22 times in 2022, holding 11 monthly meetings to discuss matters and correspondence of the EC and a further 11 “Election Mode” meetings between October 2022 and December 2022 to discuss matters relating to the 2022 General Election.

Meeting with Political Parties

The EC and the FEO jointly held meetings with political parties to discuss election-related matters. Details of the meetings are as follows:

1. EC and FEO meeting with Political Parties - 18 February 2021 at the FEO Conference Room;
2. EC and FEO meeting with Political Parties - 18 March 2022 at the FEO Conference Room;
3. EC and FEO meeting with Political Parties - 21 April 2022 at the Conference Room of Suvavou House, Level 9, Suva; and
4. EC and FEO meeting with Political Parties - 12 November 2022 at the Civic Center.

Voter Education & Engagement

The EC is responsible for voter education under the Constitution. On 22 December 2021, the EC approved awareness material, including flip charts, brochures, desktop calendars and prisms for the “Know Your Election” [“KYE”] campaign. The full Voter Education Programme approved by the EC and implemented by the FEO was set out in the report from the Acting SOE on the 2022 General Election (annexed at *Annex 6* of this Joint Report) at page 24.

On 25 February 2022, the KYE was launched at the Grand Pacific Hotel and ended on 02 April 2022. The EC joined the FEO team delivering the KYE awareness campaign in some locations: Sabeto/ Natalau/ Wailoko, Lautoka Muslim College, Vunika Settlement 1, LDS Church College, Naitalasese Settlement Advisory Councillor’s Residence, Tailevu North High School, Deepwater Area, Advisory Councillor’s Residence, Lami High School, Sangam Sadhu Kuppuswamy Memorial College, Labasa Sangam Nursing School and Levuka.

A Stakeholder Engagement Forum on enhancing voter participation was held by the FEO at the Grand Pacific Hotel on 30 March 2022. This was attended by the EC Chairperson, Mr Nand and the EC Members including Ms Ledua, Ms Jenkins, Ms Lee Wah and Ms Raniga. Other participants included various civil society organisations, members of political parties and interested individuals who applied through an expression of interest.

The EC Chairperson opened the forum and was a panelist during the first session of the forum covering voter turnout and survey. The Chairperson spoke about the turnout on Election Day. EC Member Ms Raniga was a panelist for the second session, which discussed Regional Election Management Initiatives in Enhancing Voter Participation. Ms Raniga spoke on how the EC enhances voter participation in Fiji. The EC Chairperson also closed the stakeholder forum.

Electoral Complaints

The EC views complaints as an important method for the management of an organisation to be held accountable to the public. Voters were encouraged to air their grievances through our complaints platform, which includes complaints to the secretariat email, EC website complaints portal, and phone calls to the secretariat staff. *A list of complaints received during the Writ period is annexed in “Annex 5”.*

Legal Challenges

At the conclusion of the 2022 General Election, no Petitions were filed challenging the outcome of the election. However, an application for leave to apply for judicial review was filed on 25 November 2022 by Seremaia Tui also known as Seremaia Tuiteci, case number JR 05 of 2022. The matter was dismissed by the High Court on 11 July 2023.

Election Expenditure

The EC received a total of \$481,023 for the Election period and an operation budget of \$337,285 for the year 2022-2023. The details of the EC Budget and Expenditure for January 2022 - December 2022 are below.

Table 3: EC Budget & Expenditure for January 2022 - December 2022

Activities	Total Budget January 2022 - December 2022	Total Expenditure January 2022 - December 2022
Information Technology Expenses	3,136.28	377.88
Electoral Commission Allowance	254,790.00	127,530.00
Legal Fees	41,939.00	-
Marketing Costs	61,698.86	42,302.47
Personnel Emoluments Expenses	85,494.08	76,706.12
Postage and Courier Expenses	2,030.65	294.49
Office Administration Expenses	36,921.00	13,983.52
Telecommunication Expenses	6,549.00	274.31
Travel and Accommodation Expenses	104,339.33	24,670.83
Financial Expenses	200.00	102.60
EC and Office Meeting Expense	18,500.00	7,118.22
VAT Expenses	32,012.00	11,733.07
Operating Expense - Total	647,610.20	304,667.93

International Support

The EC takes this opportunity to express its appreciation for all the support received by the EC and FEO from the international community.

UNDP provided support in the form of funding for the leadership and media training, and for stakeholder engagement in electoral education.

On behalf of the EC and FEO, the EC Chairperson received from the High Commission of India four (4) Mahindra Twin Cab vehicles and indelible ink for election purposes.

The United Kingdom High Commission provided the funding for the Election Visitor Programme. The EC attended both the welcome and farewell events of this programme.

The New Zealand Electoral Commission provided funding for an audit of the Results Management Information System.

A special acknowledgement is extended to all the technical advisors from the Australian Electoral Commission and the New Zealand Electoral Commission who provided the much needed expertise to assist the EC and FEO to prepare for and successfully carry out their functions under the Constitution and the Act in conducting the 2022 General Election.

To provide assistance and support to the SoE, New Zealand contributed funding for the position of Deputy Supervisor of Elections, which was initially filled by Mr. Craig Rickards. However, due to health issues, Mr. Craig Rickards resigned from the position, and subsequently, Mr. Robin Boyd was appointed. Both Mr. Rickards and Mr. Boyd brought valuable knowledge and skills necessary for capacity building within the FEO. They also ensured that critical timelines and milestones were met.

The EC expresses its sincere gratitude and appreciation to all the donor partners.

Inter-agency cooperation

A special appreciation is extended to all state institutions and government departments for the cooperation and support provided to the EC. All these institutions ensured that assistance to the EC was provided in a timely manner. It is also very encouraging to note that the institutions prioritized EC requests and also ensured that contingency plans were in place to cater for EC needs.

The EC acknowledges the close partners during the Writ period to ensure the delivery of the 2022 General Election: the Solicitor General's Office for gazetting election notices on time; the Fiji Police Force for providing security for EC members; the Office of His Excellency the President for Issuance of Writ and Return of Writ events; the Office of the Hon. Speaker in receiving the elected members of Parliament.

The EC also acknowledges any contributing department or organization that is not individually listed.

Conclusion

The 2022 General Election marked Fiji's third electoral event using the open list proportional representation system.

The EC noted the remarkably low rate of invalid votes, at just 0.70%, which is an encouraging outcome in terms of reflecting voter understanding of the voting process.

The former members of the EC monitored the administration of the delivery of the 2022 General Election in accordance with the Constitution and the Act.

Recommendations

MOG 2022 Fijian Election, Final Report: Summary of Recommendations Response from EC and FEO

The EC and FEO welcome the Final Report from the Multinational Observer Group [“MOG”], annexed at “Annex 7” of this Report, and the recommendations set out in it. We have considered the MOG Report and briefly set out below are our responses to those recommendations. While a few of the recommendations are not strictly within the scope of our respective mandates, we have responded to those matters from the perspective of stakeholders in the wider democratic process.

MOG Recommendation	Response from EC and FEO
Concerning the Electoral System and Operations	
1. Review restrictions on election-related activities for domestic and traditional Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), particularly in relation to candidate-development activities, which will result in wider participation in the electoral system by all sectors of society, including women (page 15).	We recommend that a review of the restrictions be included in the review of the electoral legislation announced by Cabinet and scheduled to commence this year. We look forward to being actively engaged in the review process as a whole.
2. Conduct an external audit of the National Voter Register to ensure accuracy and public confidence (page 17).	We agree that ensuring accuracy of the National Voter Register is important to maintaining public confidence in it. We continue to pursue options for conducting an external audit of the Register.
3. Clarify the validity of voter cards and other allowable documents early ahead of next election to maximise voter turn-out (page 18).	We understand that there was some voter confusion in relation to the drive to update voter cards, and will work to minimise any potential for such confusion in the future elections.
Concerning the Legal Framework	
4. Consider the appropriateness of the severe criminal penalties in electoral legislation, including the Electoral Act 2014, and whether the desire to deter criminal conduct, ultimately diminishes public confidence in the EC and FEO (aspirational recommendation, page 20).	We recommend that a review of the criminal penalties be included in the review of the electoral legislation announced by Cabinet and scheduled to commence this year. We look forward to being actively engaged in the review process as a whole.
5. Consider whether the length and detail of the Electoral Act 2014 affects the public’s readability and understanding of the legal framework regarding elections, to the detriment of public confidence. Consistent with recommendations in 2018, the MOG also recommends relevant Fijian institutions work towards consolidating and simplifying relevant electoral legislation, including the Electoral Act 2014 (aspirational recommendation, page 20).	We recommend that the length and complexity of the electoral legislation be considered as part of the review of the electoral legislation announced by Cabinet and scheduled to commence this year. We look forward to being actively engaged in the review process as a whole.
6. Review the appropriateness of the Supervisor of Election’s (SoE) powers, particularly in subsections 6(1A) - (1C) of the Electoral Act 2014 (page 23).	We recommend that a review of the SoE’s powers – including in relation to the variety of offices the SoE holds <i>ex officio</i> – be included in the review of the electoral legislation announced by Cabinet and scheduled to commence this year. We look forward to being actively engaged in the review process as a whole.

7. Ensure best efforts are undertaken to use full parliamentary consultation processes when amending electoral legislation, including providing advice to relevant decision-makers regarding the appropriateness of using Standing Order 51 when passing amendments to election-related legislation (aspirational recommendation, page 23).	We look forward to being consulted whenever any amendments to electoral legislation are being contemplated. While we have no mandate in relation to the parliamentary process, we understand that democracies with equivalent provisions to Standing Order 51 use them sparingly, and rarely in relation to electoral amendments, in order to preserve the spirit of Parliamentary democracy. We therefore support the use of the full parliamentary consultation and legislative amendment processes when amending electoral legislation.
Concerning the Electoral Authorities	
8. Develop and better publicise procedures for the EC to ensure due process in considering complaints against the SoE, political parties and the FEO (page 26).	The EC is reviewing the procedures it inherited from the previous constituted EC for processing complaints, objections and appeals, and the means of publicising them.
Concerning the Pre-Election and Campaign Environment	
9. Review the appropriateness of section 115 of the Electoral Act 2014, especially when its effect on free political debate is considered cumulatively with the newly inserted subsections 110A and 144A (aspirational recommendation, page 28).	We recommend that a review of these sections be included in the review of the electoral legislation announced by Cabinet and scheduled to commence this year. We look forward to being actively engaged in the review process as a whole.
10. Develop guidelines for the conduct of Ministers, Members of Parliament and the civil service when the government is in 'caretaker mode' to reinforce public confidence in a level political playing field (aspirational recommendation, page 35).	We have no mandate in relation to the conduct of Members of Parliament or the civil service. However, we understand that democratic international good practice recognises the value of guidelines for their conduct during the caretaker period to ensure public confidence in elections.
11. Require all political parties to report campaign expenditure and consider setting campaign expenditure limits (page 37).	We recommend that a review of political party campaign expenditure and reporting be included in the review of the electoral legislation announced by Cabinet and scheduled to commence this year. We look forward to being actively engaged in the review process as a whole.
12. Consider providing technical support and potentially public funding for the costing of parties' political manifestos to ensure voters have reliable policy information (aspirational recommendation, page 38).	We recommend the requirement for political parties to cost their manifestos be included in the review of the electoral legislation announced by Cabinet and scheduled to commence this year, with a view to repealing it. If any such legislative requirements remain, we recommend that Parliament considers how to appropriately support political parties to comply with such requirements. We suggest that, as election management bodies are required to remain politically neutral, it would be inappropriate for such support in relation to political party manifestos to be provided by the EC and/or FEO. We look forward to being actively engaged in the electoral legislation review process as a whole.

Concerning Public Awareness and Civil Society Participation	
13. The MOG recommends that the EC and FEO strengthen efforts to build productive partnerships with civil society organisations during both the pre-election phase and following the issuance of the Writ, and to actively work with CSOs in voter awareness, information, and education activities (page 41).	We value the productive relationships with civil society organisations and recognise the important role they play as stakeholders in the electoral process. We intend to continue to develop these relationships, in particular with domestic CSOs.
14. Consider how domestic observers and other international non-governmental observers can be incorporated into future electoral processes (page 41).	In accordance with section 119 of the Electoral Act, the Minister may invite or appoint observers and determine the terms of reference. We support the Minister considering the inclusion of a broader range of observers, including domestic observers and international non-governmental observers. We would also welcome being consulted on the composition and architecture of the observer groups.
Concerning Women and Voters with Disabilities	
15. All stakeholders continue their efforts to promote women's representation and safeguard gender diversity in the electoral system, including as candidates; and that gender safeguards be integrated into any electoral system reforms (page 42).	We support the MOG's recommendation to promote women's representation and gender diversity in the electoral system. We recognise that this is consistent with international good practice. Fiji's international obligations, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women ["CEDAW"], which Fiji ratified in 1995, obliges Fiji to "take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men." (Article 3) Article 4 of CEDAW clarifies that taking "temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination". We recommend that the review consider the implementation of temporary special measures to enhance gender diversity and women's representation in Parliament. We will continue to review our processes to identify and rectify any potential barriers to women's participation and to promote their participation in the electoral process.
16. Continue the work of the Elections Disability Access Working Group (EDAWG) to develop better support services for voters with disabilities (page 43).	The FEO intends to continue its partnership with representatives of the Organisations of Persons with Disability sector through EDAWG, and to continue to seek ways to enhance participation for voters with disabilities.
Concerning the Media and Elections	
17. Review the Media Industry Development Authority of Fiji's (MIDA) mandate and operations and relevant procedures to create greater certainty and clarity for media organisations (aspirational recommendation, page 46).	The MIDA Act 2010 was repealed on 6 April 2023.

18. Review the operation of media blackout requirement in the law and providing greater clarity through published guidelines (page 46).	We recommend that a review of the provisions in the Electoral Act regarding the media blackout be included in the review of the electoral legislation announced by Cabinet and scheduled to commence this year. We look forward to being actively engaged in the review process as a whole. We will then review and enhance our associated guidelines and the publication of them.
19. Review the appropriateness of the EC guidelines on the conduct of opinion polls and their effective constraint on the media's ability to contribute to public discourse and political accountability (page 46).	The EC intends to review these guidelines and the associated processes well in advance of the conduct of the next election.
Concerning FEO's Communications and Publication of Results	
20. Review the policies and methods of communication of important election information, including provisional and final results, and consider a simple analogue back-up, such as a manual results tally board, to complement the digital FEO Results App with strengthened verification protocols (page 58).	As part of its Lessons Learned activities, the FEO is reviewing its methods of communicating and publishing election results including the digital Results App. We look forward to the findings of the Final Report of the external audit.

Further Recommendations

In addition to our responses to the recommendations from the MOG Report on the 2022 Election, the EC and the FEO submit the following further recommendations for consideration.

1. EC Institutional Continuity, Accountability and Effectiveness

Section 135 of the Constitution currently provides for EC members to be appointed for a term of three (3) years. However, the electoral cycle is four (4) years. This means that after much effort and public funds have been invested in developing the capacity and electoral expertise of EC members, their appointments can expire prior to the election. This is just when the EC is required to make critical electoral decisions and adjudicate on various electoral disputes. The terms of the EC members need to be synchronised with the electoral cycle, so that a constituted EC oversees the conduct of an election and is in a position to complete the statutory reports to the President and be held accountable for them. We, therefore, recommend extending the terms of Commission members under the Constitution, so that each member may be appointed for at least a full electoral cycle which is four (4) years, in order to provide continuity and effective oversight of the elections.

Furthermore, to avoid gaps in the constitution of the EC, we recommend that the President and Constitutional Offices Commission consider appointing Commission members on a staggered basis so that all appointments do not expire at the same time. This would avoid gaps in maintaining a quorum of members leading to the EC breaching its statutory obligations, and would help to retain critical institutional knowledge within the EC membership to enhance the EC's performance of its functions.

2. Secretary to the EC

To enhance the independence of the EC and FEO (and public perception of that independence), we recommend that the Electoral Act be amended to remove the Supervisor of Elections as the Secretary to the EC. We further recommend that the EC be empowered to appoint its own Secretary, and be funded sufficiently to attract high calibre personnel to the position and an accompanying Secretariat.

3. Audit of FEO Systems

International good practice reflects regular auditing of core electoral systems, to maintain public and stakeholder confidence in the conduct of the elections. For the 2022 General Election, the EC conducted an audit of the Results Management System and tendered for suitable service providers to conduct an audit of the Voter Registration System. We continue to prioritise the audit of the Voter Registration System, and we recommend that an appropriate budget be made available to conduct audits of core systems on an ongoing basis. We will publish the resulting reports to enhance transparency in the electoral system.

4. Legal Framework

The legal framework plays a vital role in the electoral system. We, therefore, we support the planned review of the

electoral legislation announced by Cabinet. We recommend that the framework is thoroughly reviewed to align with international good practice and standards, and for compliance with Fiji's obligations under international law, including conventions.

In particular and, in addition to the matters set out in our responses to the MOG recommendations, we recommend that the legislative review include consideration of the following.

(a) Maintaining Election Management Body Neutrality

The EC and, to an extent the Supervisor of Elections, have a range of quasi-judicial functions most of which are capable of neutral adjudication. However, some of the more recent legislative amendments expand the mandate of the EC and/or SoE into dispute resolution activities that pose risks to the perception of our political neutrality and/or respect for the separation of powers. A good example is the requirement for the EC to provide mediation, and if necessary, arbitration in relation to disputes between political parties. We consider these inappropriate responsibilities to be prescribed for election management bodies and recommend that such provisions be removed.

(b) Legislative Stability in Election Year

Changes to election laws in the lead up to the election create public suspicion about motives for the change, and can introduce last minute complexities and challenges for voter education and the conduct of the election. Following examples from some other democracies including the Pacific, we, therefore, recommend the review considers a legislative amendment to ensure that any amendments to electoral laws made in election year do not take effect until after the conduct of the election. There could be an exception where the EC and FEO are consulted and agree that implementing the amendment before the election would be practicable.

(c) Early Disclosure of Election Date

There are internationally a range of models where the election date is fixed, or capable of being determined via a formula, in the legislation. Other models include flexibility for an earlier election if required, but a fixed date for the election if it is not called by a certain time in the electoral cycle. In Fiji, the date of the election is entirely at the discretion of the Prime Minister and President, requiring only 6 weeks' notice for carrying out one of the largest logistical exercises across all of Fiji and internationally for our out-of-country voters. We recommend the review of electoral legislations consider the viability of a deemed (fixed) date for the national election (calculated by statutory formula) if the election date is not announced within a prescribed period prior to the last possible date for the election.

(d) Enhancing Voter Participation via Access to Elected Representatives

International research indicates that voters are more engaged in elections, if they feel they have some form of direct access to their elected representatives. Fiji's model of open list proportional representation, with a single constituency, is simple for voters to understand and for us to administer. However, we are conscious that compared to many other established and respected democracies, Fijian voters have no link or access to their elected Members of Parliament. We recommend the legislative review consider options for mitigating this weakness in the current electoral system so that voters have an avenue for bringing significant issues to the attention of government, and are, therefore, more likely to participate in the election.

5. Legal Framework: Further Recommendations of the EC

(a) Independent Registrar of Political Parties, and the Greater Public Disclosure

Currently, the Supervisor of Elections is also the Registrar of Political Parties. We recommend the review consider removing the SoE as the Registrar and that a separate appointee holds this role. We further recommend that all financial reports required of Political Parties be published to enhance transparency of political party funding and expenditure.

(b) Enhancing Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the Electoral System

It is widely recognised that persons with disabilities remain significantly marginalised from the electoral process and there are areas of discrimination in the law.

Fiji ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2017. Article 29(a) of the CRPD states that "State Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others, and shall undertake:

- a) To ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others, directly or through freely chosen representatives, including the right and opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote and be elected, ...”

We recommend that the review consider ways for Fiji to fully comply with all its obligations under the CRPD by removing all discriminatory provisions and strengthening the legislation to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to participate as voters and candidates on an equal basis with others.

6. Conclusion

It is timely that Fiji’s electoral laws, promulgated for the 2014 General Election, are comprehensively reviewed. The EC and the FEO look forward to being actively engaged in the review process as a whole.



ANNEX 1



EXTRAORDINARY



GOVERNMENT OF FIJI GAZETTE

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY OF THE FIJI GOVERNMENT

Vol. 23

MONDAY, 31st OCTOBER 2022

No. 129

[1455]



CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI GENERAL ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT 2022

WRIT FOR ELECTION (Section 59(1))

By His Excellency **RATU WILIAME MAIVALILI KATONIVERE**, the President of the Republic of Fiji, in exercise of the powers conferred under section 59(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji.

RATU WILIAME MAIVALILI KATONIVERE
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI

To the **ELECTORAL COMMISSION** of Fiji

WHEREAS by virtue of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji, it has become necessary to hold an election of members to sit and vote in Parliament.

NOW THEREFORE in exercise of the powers conferred under section 59(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji and section 21 of the Electoral Act 2014 and on the advice of the Prime Minister, I command you to cause an election to be held according to law, of fifty five (55) members to sit and vote in Parliament and I appoint the sixth hour past noon on the 31st day of October 2022 to be the time and date before which the registration of voters for the election is to be made and I hereby direct that you must receive the nominations of candidates at the Fijian Elections Office situated at St Stephen's Building, Victoria Parade, Suva, by twelve noon on the 14th day of November 2022 and in the event that the election is contested, you must cause a poll to be taken on the 14th day of December 2022 and that you may cause pre-poll voting and postal voting prior to the 14th day of December 2022 and I command you to endorse the names of the candidates elected as members of Parliament and return this Writ on or before the 28th day of December 2022.

Given under my hand at Suva this 31st day of October 2022.

W. M. KATONIVERE
President of the Republic of Fiji



ANNEX 2



EXTRAORDINARY

2963



GOVERNMENT OF FIJI GAZETTE

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY OF THE FIJI GOVERNMENT

Vol. 23

SATURDAY, 19th NOVEMBER 2022

No. 140

[1523]

In the matter of the Electoral Act 2014
Section 35(1)

NOTICE OF POLL

Following the conclusion of the Nominations process, the Electoral Commission has noted the number of Candidates nominated for the General Election is greater than the number of seats in Parliament and therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred upon the Electoral Commission under Section 35 (1) of the Electoral Act 2014, the Electoral Commission hereby publishes the following:

- (i) Name, residential address, occupation and voter number of each candidate for the 2022 General Election;
- (ii) Addresses of all polling stations and venues established for the purpose of taking votes during polling; and
- (iii) Polling on Election Day, 14 December 2022, to commence at 7:30am until 6:00pm.

Dated at Suva this 16th day of November, 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mukesh Nand'.

MUKESH NAND
Chairperson of the Electoral Commission

2990

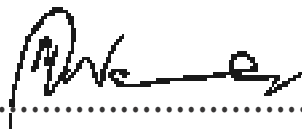
[1524]

In the matter of the Electoral Act 2014
Section 82 (3)

NOTICE OF PRE-POLL

In exercise of the powers conferred upon the Electoral Commission under Section 82(3) of the Electoral Act 2014, the Electoral Commission hereby publishes the venues where pre-poll voting shall take place and the dates and hours upon which the Fijian Elections Office will attend at those venues for the conduct of pre-poll voting.

Dated at Suva this 16th day of November, 2022


.....

MUKESH NAND
Chairperson of the Electoral Commission

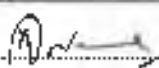


ANNEX 3



THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION CANDIDATE ALLOCATION FORM 2022

District	Fiji First	SOCCERUS	NFP	The People's Alliance
1	26094	2472	110	16581
2	26094	437	1370	16581
3	26094	2141	2317	2491
4	26094	667	1314	639
5	26094	603	2428	41-1
6	26094	4014	176	3918
7	26094	4038	1572	1007
8	26094	2739	2106	2411
9	26094	3622	2329	1071
10	26094	3691	4668	171
11	26094	2417	4101	1318
12	26094	2743	2003	1226
13	26094	314	1094	1446
14	26094	1124	2014	2270
15	26094	1727	2082	1145
16	26094	1831	2715	1228
17	26094	411	2514	1159
18	26094	2422	2453	211
19	26094	3248	2324	2760
20	26094	3292	2422	1071
21	26094	3299	2767	818
22	26094	1157	1112	803
23	26094	1098	1101	783
24	26094	107	1119	713
25	26094	1097	1743	704
26	26094	917	1675	6712
27	26094	932	1684	5474
28	26094	422	1874	4714
29	26094	107	1493	5123
30	26094	114	1172	411
31	26094	106	1391	510
32	26094	109	1142	5421
33	26094	106	1123	5501
34	26094	102	1778	5109
35	26094	111	1716	4621
36	26094	101	1215	4617
37	26094	101	105	4683
38	26094	107	1321	4613
39	26094	107	1301	4622
40	26094	107	1071	4721
41	26094	107	1048	4722
42	26094	107	1021	4717
43	26094	107	1061	4714
44	26094	102	105	4725
45	26094	107	101	4723
46	26094	107	103	4746
47	26094	102	109	4715
48	26094	107	107	4717
49	26094	107	107	4712
50	26094	107	107	4740
51	26094	107	107	4712
52	26094	107	107	4712
53	26094	107	107	4712
54	26094	107	107	4712
55	26094	107	107	4712

Signature: 
Nuseli Xero
Chairperson of the Electoral Commission



ANNEX 4



EXTRAORDINARY



GOVERNMENT OF FIJI GAZETTE

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY OF THE FIJI GOVERNMENT

Vol. 23

MONDAY, 19th DECEMBER 2022

No. 148

[1629]

CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI

GENERAL ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT 2022

RETURN OF WRIT FOR ELECTION

President of the Republic of Fiji

IN accordance with section 106(2) of the Electoral Act 2014, the Electoral Commission hereby returns unto you the names of those persons elected on the 19 December 2022 as members of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji.

Names of candidates elected as members of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji —

Akbar, Rosy Sofia	Qereqeretabua, Lenora Salusalu
Bainimarama, Josaia Voreqe	Rabuka, Sitiveni Ligamamada
Bainivalu, Alitia Vakatai Bavou Cirikiyasawa	Radrodro, Aseri Masivou
Bala, Parveen Kumar	Ravu, Kalaveti Vodo
Bia, Alik	Rayalu, Vatimi Tidara Tuinasakea Kaunitawake
Bulitavu, Mosese Dreca	Reddy, Mahendra
Chand, Hem	Saukuru, Jese
Ditoka, Sakiasi Raisevu	Sayed-Khaiyum, Aiyaz
Gavoka, Viliame Rogoibulu	Seruiratu, Inia Batikoto
Immanuel, Esrom Yosef	Sharma, Rinesh Rajesh
Kamikamica, Manoa Seru Nakausabaria	Singh, Agni Deo
Kiran, Sashi	Singh, Charan Jeeth
Kirpal, Sanjay Salend	Tabuya, Lynda Diseru
Koroilavesau, Semi Tuleka	Tikoduadua, Pio
Koya, Faiyaz Siddiq	Tubuna, Sakiusa
Kumar, Premila Devi	Tuinaceva, Naisa Tatau
Kumar, Shalen	Tuisawau, Ro Filipe Qaraniqio
Lal, Ketan Kirit	Tuiwailevu, Isikeli
Lalabalavu, Ratu Atonio Rabici	Tunabuna, Tomasi Niuvo
Maharaj, Alvick Avhikrit	Turaga, Siromi Dokonivalu
Naivalurua, Ioane	Usamate, Jone
Nalumisa, Maciu Katamotu	Vakalalabure, RT Rakuita Solesole Sauramaeva
Nand, Joseph Nitya	Vanawalu, Iliesa Sovui
Nath, Vijay	Vasu, Ifereimi
Naupoto, Viliame	Vocea, Jovesa Rokuta
Niudamu, Ratu Josaia Bulavakarua	Vosarogo, Filimoni Wainiqolo Rasokisoki
Pillay, Viam	Waqainabete, Ifereimi
Prasad, Biman Chand	

Dated this 19th day of December 2022.

M. NAND
Chairperson of the Electoral Commission

EXTRAORDINARY



GOVERNMENT OF FIJI GAZETTE

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY OF THE FIJI GOVERNMENT

Vol. 23

MONDAY, 19th DECEMBER 2022

No. 149

[1630]

ELECTORAL ACT 2014

GENERAL ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT 2022

NAMES OF CANDIDATES ELECTED AS MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI

IN accordance with section 106(1)(b) of the Electoral Act 2014, the Electoral Commission hereby declares that the following candidates have been elected as members of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji—

Akbar, Rosy Sofia	Qereqeretabua, Lenora Salusalu
Bainimarama, Josaia Voreqe	Rabuka, Sitiveni Ligamamada
Bainivalu, Alitia Vakatai Bavou Cirikiyasawa	Radrodro, Aseri Masivou
Bala, Parveen Kumar	Ravu, Kalaveti Vodo
Bia, Alik	Rayalu, Vatimi Tidara Tuinasakea Kaunitawake
Bulitavu, Mosese Drecala	Reddy, Mahendra
Chand, Hem	Saukuru, Jese
Ditoka, Sakiasi Raisevu	Sayed-Khaiyum, Aiyaz
Gavoka, Viliame Rogoibulu	Seruiratu, Inia Batikoto
Immanuel, Esrom Yosef	Sharma, Rinesh Rajesh
Kamikamica, Manoa Seru Nakausabaria	Singh, Agni Deo
Kiran, Sashi	Singh, Charan Jeath
Kirpal, Sanjay Salend	Tabuya, Lynda Diseru
Koroilavesau, Semi Tuleca	Tikoduadua, Pio
Koya, Faiyaz Siddiq	Tubuna, Sakiusa
Kumar, Premila Devi	Tuinaceva, Naisa Tatau
Kumar, Shalen	Tuisawau, Ro Filipe Qaraniqio
Lal, Ketan Kirit	Tuiwailevu, Isikeli
Lalabalavu, Ratu Atonio Rabici	Tunabuna, Tomasi Niuvotu
Maharaj, Alvick Avhikrit	Turaga, Siromi Dokonivalu
Naivalurua, Ioane	Usamate, Jone
Nalumisa, Maciu Katamotu	Vakalalabure, RT Rakuita Solesole Sauramaeva
Nand, Joseph Nitya	Vanawalu, Iliesa Sovui
Nath, Vijay	Vasu, Ifereimi
Naupoto, Viliame	Vocea, Jovesa Rokuta
Niudamu, Ratu Josaia Bulavakarua	Vosarogo, Filimoni Wainiqolo Rasokisoki
Pillay, Viam	Waqainabete, Ifereimi
Prasad, Biman Chand	

Dated this 19th day of December 2022.

M. NAND
Chairperson of the Electoral Commission



ANNEX 5



Table 4 – Electoral Complaints directed to EC during Election Period

No.	Date Received	Details of Complainant	Nature of Complaint	Outcome
C08/22	01/11/2022	Mr Michael Ng	Poor Telephone Service	The EC forwarded the Complaint to FEO for their action on 01 November 2022. The FEO called Michael Ng few times however his phone was “unreachable”. Mr Michael Ng returned the call around 12:37pm. The FEO staff explained to Michael Ng and apologized for the inconvenience caused. Michael Ng called FEO regarding Postal Voting, which the FEO staff was able to assist him.
C09/22	15/11/2022	Mr Isikeli Nakato	Complaint against Mr. Sitiveni Rabuka (then)	The EC responded to Mr Isikeli Nakato via letter on 30/11/2022 providing its decision: <i>“The EC noted that Mr Rabuka’s nomination as a candidate for the election to Parliament has been approved by the FEO as Mr Rabuka has met the requirements that are stipulated in the Act that governs the nomination processes. The EC notes that Mr Rabuka has met all the necessary requirements in accordance with the Act and your complaint lacks merit, therefore the Commission dismisses your complaint.”</i>
C10/22	17/11/2022	Ms Asenaca Delailomaloma	Request for a Voter Card Number	The EC forwarded the Complaint on 17/11/2022 to FEO for their action.
C11/22	18/11/2022	Mr Sachuda Mudaliar	Query on 5% threshold	The EC responded to Mr Sachuda Mudaliar via letter and email on 24/11/2022 providing its clarification: <i>“Section 104 (3) of the Electoral Act 2014 which states that Political Parties or Independent Candidates that do not meet the 5% threshold will not qualify for seat allocation.”</i>
C12/22	18/11/2022	Mr Kamlesh Prasad	Voters Roll	The EC responded to Mr Kamlesh on 24/11/2022 providing its decision: <i>“The EC wishes to highlight that the SoE is not required under the law to publish the voter list online, as the information that is obtained in the voter list contains confidential information of every registered voter in Fiji and Overseas. Therefore, the EC will not allow the online publication of the voter list.”</i>
C13/22	24/11/2022	Mr Mesulame Sauvolili	Breach of Section 112 of the Electoral Act 2014– Complaint against Mr. Alex O’ Connor (FijiFirst Candidate)	The EC forwarded the complaint to SoE on 25 November for further action.
C14/22	26/11/2022	Mr Kaushik Prasad	Review of Candidate 235 – Nitish Sharma	The EC forwarded the Complaint to SoE for further action on 27 November 2022

No.	Date Received	Details of Complainant	Nature of Complaint	Outcome
C15/22	29/11/2022	Mr James Manulevu	Indelible Ink - 2022 Election	The EC responded on 01 December 2022 providing its decision: <i>"The EC addressed that the marking of the Indelible Ink on a voter's finger as per section 53 (2)(d) is the final proof that a voter has voted and should not be allowed into the polling station. However, if a voter is able to remove the indelible ink by whatever force of nature then there are other four systems as mentioned above to verify that the voter has voted and should prevent a voter from casting a second vote."</i>
C16/22	30/11/2022	Mr Ganesh Prasad	Integrity of Elections	The EC responded on 05 December 2022 providing its decision: <i>"The EC wishes to highlight that the voter list contains the confidential information of every registered voter in Fiji and Overseas and will not be made available for public viewing unless approved by the EC. Therefore, the EC wishes to inform you that you have been given the approval to view the Voter List provided you make arrangements with the FEO on the time and day you wish to visit the FEO Headquarters at 59-63 High Street, Toorak for viewing. Kindly be informed that you will not take pictures or obtain a copy of the Voter List upon viewing. The EC wishes to highlight that Section 116 3(c) of the Act prohibits the use of any language that threatens or incites violence, however after full view of the video and online publication of the local news that dates back to the event, the EC noted that the Political Party cautioned the public of the consequences of certain manifestos that have been campaigned and did not threat or incite violence. Therefore, in light of the above the EC dismisses your claims of threats and violence as stated in Concern Cluster No. 2 of your letter."</i>
C17/22	04/12/2022	Ms Audhraj	Postal vote registration	The EC forwarded the complaint to FEO on 14/11/2022 for their action
C18/22	09/12/2022	Mr Sundar Singh	FijiFirst Manifesto	The EC responded on 12 December 2022 providing its decision: <i>"The EC writes to respond that your complaint does not fall within the ambits of Section 116 of the Electoral Act 2014 which elaborates on the provisions of Campaign Rules for an election. The EC having noted the above will not proceed further with your complaint and dismisses the same."</i>

No.	Date Received	Details of Complainant	Nature of Complaint	Outcome
C19/22	10/12/2022	Mr Mohammed Yunus	Postal Vote & Complaint Against SoE	The EC responded on 12 December 2022 providing its decision: <i>"The EC wishes to highlight that according to Section 41(9) of the Electoral Act 2014 states that overseas voters who are registered to vote but have not applied for postal voting may vote in Suva on December 14, 2022, from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Kindly note that overseas voters are advised to vote at Saint. Stephens FEO Shed in Suva on election day."</i>
C20/22	14/12/2022	Mr Nirlesh Chand	Unable to change the polling venue	The EC responded on 16 December 2022 providing its decision: <i>"The EC noted your letter and wishes to address that according to Section 50(1) of the Electoral Act, 2014 ["Act"] states that a registered voter is entitled to vote only at the polling station at which he or she is assigned according to the voter list of the polling station. Therefore, in light of the above provision of the Act, the EC wishes to address that you can only vote in the polling venue that you are assigned to vote in and you are not to permitted by to vote anywhere else."</i>
C21/22	14/12/2022	Ms Roselyne Singh	Not able to vote	The EC forwarded the complaint to FEO on 16/12/2022 for their action.
C22/22	14/12/2022	Mr Kritesh Prasad	Black out Period	The EC responded on 16 December 2022 providing its decision: <i>"The EC noted your letter and wishes to address that the FEO had addressed the public upon receiving complaints during the 48 hours black out period to adhere to the provisions of the Electoral Act, 2014 concerning campaign restrictions. The EC wishes to highlight that the FEO had carried out due course of the blackout period monitoring and any breach of the Act has been dealt with accordingly."</i>

No.	Date Received	Details of Complainant	Nature of Complaint	Outcome
C23/22	15/12/2022	Maleli Sovea Laisenia	Demand for Manual Counting	The EC responded on 16 December 2022 providing its decision: <i>"We refer to your various request demanding of the manual counting of the votes in the Election and we write to respond that the votes are actually being counted manually by the FEO staff by using ballot papers in the presence of Political Parties Agents and we hope that the same clarifies your request.</i> <i>As to the request on explanations for the anomaly in the provisional results published on the night of 14 December 2022, we are of the view that the former SoE has provided sufficient clarity to the media regarding the same. We note that the app has been rectified and results were published thereafter and we hope the same clarifies your request."</i>
C24/22	15/12/2022	Maca Moce, Ilisapeci Sagale, Elisha Joshua, Litiana Tique, Caqinatoba Vikaili	Demand Manual Counting	
C25/22	15/12/2022	Isaiah Delaitelau	Demand for Manual Counting	
C26/22	15/12/2022	Jioji Masivesi Cakacaka	Manual Counting of 2022 Votes	
C27/22	15/12/2022	Sosiceni Caunivalu	Demand for full manual counting of votes of the National Election 2022	
C28/22	15/12/2022	Levani Delaivuna	As a registered voter I demand another ballot recount but done manually	
C29/22	15/12/2022	Eneriko Ratuloaloa	No credibility in FEO Software = No credible vote counting system in place	
C30/22	15/12/2022	Alini Qalivutu	Demand of a manual counting	
C31/22	15/12/2022	Meresiana Kula Basaga	Manual Recounts of Votes	
C32/22	15/12/2022	Miliana Halafi	Manual Count of Votes	
C33/22	15/12/2022	Samu Namosimalua	Complaint regarding Elections count process	
C34/22	15/12/2022	Vini Qica	Elections count process	
C35/22	15/12/2022	Gladys Evans	Manual Recount	
C36/22	15/12/2022	Alitia Namosimalua	Complaint regarding Elections count process	
C37/22	15/12/2022	Viliame Baleisuva	Result of the 2022 General Election	
C38/22	15/12/2022	Sauvuni Nau-lumatua	Demand for manual recount	
C39/22	15/12/2022	Kamlesh Prasad	Manual Recounts of ballots	
C40/22	16/12/2022	Betty Hay	Election Results	
C41/22	16/12/2022	Sireli Kini	2022 General Election Vote count	

No.	Date Received	Details of Complainant	Nature of Complaint	Outcome
C42/22	16/12/2022	No Name	Vote Count results	The EC noted that the complainant gave wrong personal details. The complaint was regarded as hoax.
C43/22	17/12/2022	Lucricia Thompson	Missing Vote	The EC noted and forwarded the complaint on 17 November 2022 to FEO.
C44/22	18/12/2022	Jone Tukana	FEO app discrepancy	The EC responded on 23 December 2022 providing its decision: <i>"The EC noted your complaint and the FEO have rectified the same."</i>



ANNEX 6





Fijian Elections Office
My Election. My Fiji

2022

GENERAL ELECTION
Supervisor of Elections

REPORT

15/03/23

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Foreword by the Acting Supervisor of Elections

With respect to the requirements of section 109 (1) of the Electoral Act 2014, I humbly present the 2022 General Election Report to the Electoral Commission ["EC"]. I do so on behalf of the over 10,000 stoic men and women who worked relentlessly through various challenges and circumstances to successfully conduct the 2022 General Election.



Thanksgiving is ascribed to Almighty God for blessing the Fijian Elections Office ["FEO"] family with the perseverance, strength, courage, determination and health to effectively deliver yet another successful General Election for Fiji. Since being formally established by the Electoral Act, on 28 March 2014, the FEO has now successfully conducted 3 General Elections.

It would also be remiss of me to not acknowledge the tireless efforts of the over 10,000 staff for their sacrifice, stoicism, selflessness and determination to deliver yet another General Election for Fiji. I would also like to thank the former Supervisor of Elections Mr. Mohammed Saneem for his leadership of our organization as well as during the 2022 General Election.

This report covers the operational aspects of the 2022 General Election and lays out in detail the tremendous undertakings of FEO for the same. The 2022 General Election presented the FEO with the opportunity to trial and implement new innovations and best practices, of which, I invite you to read about as detailed in this report.

The FEO has come a long way in conducting General Elections in Fiji as a fully operational entity in between General Elections having an adequate compliment of staff and appropriate financial support from the State. In respect of this, the FEO has been able to further develop and build its capacity and operability to conduct General Elections in Fiji. The FEO will continue to do so in achieving greater levels of credibility and trust by the people of Fiji, for such a time as this.

I would also like to, at this juncture, thank all the Members of the EC, Technical Advisors, external stakeholders and partner agencies for their assistance and collaboration with the FEO for the conduct of the 2022 General Election. Your support and assistance has not gone unnoticed and will always be greatly appreciated.

It is in this tone of appreciation and thanksgiving that I submit this report to the EC.

Ana Mataiciwa (Ms)
Acting Supervisor of Elections

Foreword by the Deputy Supervisor of Elections

Ni Sa Bula Vinaka!

It was with some trepidation that I took up the role of Deputy Supervisor of Elections [“**DSOE**”] in October last year with the General Election imminent.



My primary responsibility was election operations, so I was fortunate to have had a long operational history with the FEO to rely on, commencing with the role of Director of Operations in 2014. Following that election, I continued as a Technical Advisor with the FEO until commencing in the DSOE role. This included the 2018 General Election. In addition, the senior staff of the Operations Directorate were very experienced in the planning and delivery of elections which was a distinct advantage for the FEO.

As in 2018 there was a delay in the calling of the election. This enabled operational staff to review and make modifications to their plans. Modifications such as amending the steps in the counting process which were tested to achieve time savings - an important consideration in ensuring results are delivered as quickly as possible.

The 2022 General Election also saw the FEO enhance its reputation for innovative approaches to delivering elections especially in the use of technology.

This approach, driven by the SoE, resulted in some projects such as the Candidate Ball Draw being presented in a more modern and professional way. Amendments to the My Polling Assistant app for field staff enabled more efficient monitoring and reporting during Election Day. Another first in election delivery in Fiji was the provision of a free bus service for voters to make access to polling stations easier for all voters.

I was very proud of the way all the staff of the FEO worked diligently and collegiately to deliver a successful election for all Fijians. Their efforts were recognised positively by the Multinational Observer Group [“**MOG**”] in their report on the 2022 General Election.

I wish everyone at the FEO all the very best for the future.

Vinaka vakalevu

Robin Boyd

Deputy Supervisor of Elections

List of Laws:

Constitution of the Republic of Fiji, 2013
 Electoral Act, 2014
 Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding & Disclosures) Act, 2013
 Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act, 2012

List of Abbreviations:

APO	Assistant Presiding Officer
BDM	Births, Deaths and Marriages Registry
BRN	Birth Registration Number
CCEI	Centre for Credible Election Information
COL	Corporate Online Banking
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CPC	Central Processing Centre
CTD	Centre for Training and Development
DM	Divisional Manager
DR	Disaster Recovery
DSOE	Deputy Supervisor of Elections
EC	Electoral Commission
EIB	Election Information Booklet
EMS	Election Management System
EoI's	Expression of Interests
EORS	Election Officials Recruitment S
EO	Election Officials
EVR	Electronic Voter Registration
EVP	Election Visitor Program
FEO	Fijian Elections Office
FICAC	Fiji Independent Commission against Corruption
GIS	Geographic Information System
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IT	Information Technology
KYE	Know Your Election
LTA	Land Transport Authority
MOG	Multinational Observer Group
NRV	National Register of Voters
OB	Outdoor Broadcasting
PDW	Polling Day Worker
PO	Presiding Officer
PoR	Protocol of Results
PVAs	Polling Venue Assessments
QA	Quality Assurance
RMIS	Results Management Information System
SoE	Supervisor of Elections
TA	Technical Adviser
TDU	Training Development Unit
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UPS	Uninterruptible Power Supply
VIB	Voter Instruction Booklet
VPN	Virtual Private Network
VSC	Voter Services Centre
WAN	Wide Area Network

Introduction

The Fijian Elections Office

The FEO is the independent election management body responsible for the conduct of General Elections and other elections in accordance with the legal framework. As prescribed in the 2014 Electoral Act, [**“Electoral Act”**] the FEO is the Office of the Supervisor of Elections [**“SoE”**] and is situated at 59-63 High Street, Toorak, Suva. The FEO has 60 core staff and employs up-to 2,500 short term staff during elections.

It is a requirement under section 7 (1) of the Electoral Act that the SoE must conduct his or her duties and exercise his or her powers in an impartial manner and in accordance with the law. Section 8 of the Electoral Act, further guarantees that in the performance of his or her functions and the exercise of his or her powers, the SoE is not subject to the direction or control by any person, except that he or she must comply with the directions or instructions that the EC gives him or her concerning the performance of his or her functions; and a decision of a court of law exercising its jurisdiction in relation to a question on whether he or she has performed the functions or exercised the powers in accordance with the Constitution and the law, or whether he or she should or should not perform those functions or exercise those powers.

The Electoral Act further requires in its relevant sections the functioning of the FEO as described under the Electoral act and the discretion of the SoE, this ensures the independence and credibility of the organization. These requirements under the act allow for the FEO to build its capacity and operability to ensure the best standards and procedures are in place are respective of fair and credible best practices.

The independence of the FEO’s capabilities and operability’s are guided and protected in accordance with Sections 9 through 18 of the Electoral Act. The FEO also has complete financial, human resource as well as election staffing independence. These guidance’s under the Electoral Act allow for the FEO to continuously build its capacity in anticipation of serving the democratic machinery of the Republic of Fiji.

FEO Governance and Administration

The FEO is divided into 4 divisions as elaborated below:



**Former SUPERVISOR
of ELECTIONS**

Mr Mohammed Saneem



**DEPUTY SUPERVISOR
of ELECTIONS**

Mr Robin Boyd



Operations Directorate

Ms Anaseini Senimoli



Acting IT Directorate

Mr Asish Nischal Prakash



Corporate Services Directorate

Mr Sanjeshwar Ram

2020 -2023 Strategic Plan

Following the 2018 General Election, the FEO embarked on developing its second 4-year Strategic Plan. The FEO established its strategic foundations in terms of its Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles.

VISION

Our vision is to be recognised as a professional institution that conducts fair and credible Elections broadly representing the will of the Fijian people.

MISSION

Our mission as Fiji's election management body is to implement internationally recognized election best practices in accordance with the law, effectively regulate political parties and efficiently register eligible Fijians to ensure that we deliver the highest quality of election services under the supervision of the Electoral Commission.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Right to vote

Every citizen over the age of 18 years has the right to vote by secret ballot.

One person, One vote, One value

Every voter has one vote, with each vote being of equal value.

A credible single National Register of Voters

Every registered voter shall be listed on a single National Register of Voters.

Independence, Impartiality and Neutrality

The Fijian Elections Office is an independent body and shows no preference in either speech or action for any individual candidate or political party.

Excellence in Service Delivery

Provide highest quality of electoral services to all Fijians in a professional, effective and timely manner.

Good Governance

The Fijian Elections Office values accountability, honesty, integrity and transparency in all its transactions and will ensure that all legislative disclosures are properly and adequately done.

Participation

Empowering every Fijian to take ownership of the election through active involvement.

Innovation

Strive towards continuous, innovative and practical solutions to contribute towards the evolution of electoral practices in Fiji.

Verifiability

In elections, to mechanise Fijian Elections Office processes so that given the same data and assumption, an independent and impartial Observer can produce the same results.

The 2022 General Election

On 31 October 2022, the President of Fiji, His Excellency, Ratu Wiliame Katonivere issued the Writ for the 2022 General Election to the Chairperson of the EC, Mr. Mukesh Nand at the State House.

On 01 November 2022, the Nominations Period opened for the receipt of nomination of candidates for the General Election. The FEO also started the process to finalise the Voter List. The FEO printed and distributed the Provisional Voter List 4 times before the Writ was issued. After the finalisation of voter registration for the 2022 General Election, the FEO re-opened its VSC's on 11 October 2022 to facilitate replacement of VoterCards.

Candidate nominations officially closed on 14 November 2022 at 12 noon and the process for withdrawals, appeals and objections was opened the following day. The Chairperson of the EC, Mr. Mukesh Nand issued the Notice of Poll and Notice of Pre-Poll on 16 November 2022. At the conclusion of the withdrawals, appeals and objections, a total of 343 Candidates were approved to contest the 2022 General Election.

The National Candidates List Ball Draw was held on 16 November 2022 at the Civic Center Auditorium in Suva to assign numbers to individual Candidates. The numbers were drawn for all 343 Candidates and the numbers ranged from 173 to 515.

The printing of ballot papers commenced on 16 November 2022 at Star Printery in Raiwai, Suva. A total of 668,850 ballot papers were printed for Election Day. By 18 November 2022 the printing of postal ballot papers concluded and the printing of Voter Instruction Booklets commenced for all postal packages. On 18 November 2022 the packing of postal packages commenced and these packages were sent to postal voters via courier.

All applications for Postal Voting closed on 23 November 2022. Pre-Poll commenced on 05 December 2022 and concluded on 09 December 2022. It was carried out in the Central, Northern, Western and Eastern parts of Fiji. 54,207 voters cast their votes during pre-poll. A total of 9,180 postal votes were admitted to the Count out of the 11,227 that were dispatched by the FEO.

The 2022 General Election was held on 14 December 2022 where 473,910 voters cast their vote. The FEO published provisional results on Election Night as counting progressed at Polling Stations and the official and final results were issued on 18 December 2022. The turnout for the 2022 General Election was 473,910 out of 693,915 registered voters making up 68.3%. The total number of invalid votes was 3326 out of the 473,910 amounting to 0.70%.

The Chairperson of the EC, Mr. Mukesh Nand returned the Writ for the 2022 General Election to the President of Fiji His Excellency, Ratu Wiliame Katonivere on 19 December 2022.

Key Dates for the 2022 General Election

- **08 October 2022:**
 - Display of Provisional Voter List
- **13 October 2022:**
 - Display of Provisional Voter List concludes
- **31 October 2022:**
 - Writ Issued to the Electoral Commission
 - Voter Registration Closed
 - Political Party Registration Closed
 - Postal Vote Applications opened
- **01 November 2022:**
 - Nomination of Candidates opened
- **14 November 2022:**
 - Nomination of Candidates closed at 12 noon
- **15 November 2022:**
 - Withdrawal of Nomination by 12 noon
 - Objections and Appeals by 4pm
 - EC finalised Appeals and Objections decisions
- **16 November 2022:**
 - National Candidate's List Draw
 - Ballot Paper Production Commenced
- **23 November 2022:**
 - Postal Vote Applications Closed at 5pm
- **28 November 2022:**
 - Ballot Paper Production completed
- **31 November 2022:**
 - Final Voter Lists printed
- **05 December 2022:**
 - Pre-Poll Voting Commenced
- **09 December 2022:**
 - Pre-Poll Voting Concluded
- **14 December 2022:**
 - Election Day
 - Provisional Results announced
- **18 December 2022:**
 - Final National Results Tally handed over to the EC –
- **19 December 2022:**
 - Seat Allocation announced
 - EC Returned Writ for the 2022 General Election to the President
- **20 March 2023:**
 - Report by the SoE pursuant to section 109 of Electoral Act
- **15 June 2023:**
 - Joint Report by the EC and SoE pursuant to Section 14 (g) of the Electoral Act
 - SoE may destroy or cause to be destroyed physical records in relation to the 2022 GE pursuant to Section 153 of the Act

Planning for the 2022 General Election

The FEO in preparing itself for the 2022 General Election conducted several major workshops. The objective of the workshops was to develop election activity timelines from August 2021 to December 2022. Each Director had to come up with their project activity timelines and demonstrate their plan on how they were going to execute them during the election period.

Workshop Dates:

- 10 March - 11 March 2020 (1st Election Planning Workshop)
- 15 February – 16 February 2021 (2nd Election Planning Workshop)
- 14 - 15 September 2021 (3rd Election Planning Workshop)
- 12 October - 14 October 2021 (4th Election Planning Workshop)
- 15 - 17 February 2022 (Writ to Return of Writ Workshop)
- 04 July 2022 (Election Readiness Workshop)

Through these workshops, project owners were able to identify the stakeholders they needed to work with, the various requirements they needed to comply with, the equipment and venues needed in carrying out their project and the transportation plan of their project.

The timelines given by the project owners were continuously monitored and tested in the form of mock exercises.



Executive Directorate

The Executive Directorate of the FEO supports the SoE in non-core business areas. The following unit makeup the Executive Directorate and support the office of the SoE with its daily engagement;

- Political Party Management
- International Relations
- Secretariat to EC
- Internal Audit
- Legal Compliance
- Quality Control
- Legal Research and Special Projects

Political Party Management

The SoE is also the Registrar of Political Parties. The Political Parties Engagement Officer, Mr. Mesake Dawai is the Officer who administratively manages the requirements under the relevant electoral laws. The Political Parties legal framework makes it mandatory for Political Parties and its Office Holders to file declarations of Assets, Liabilities, and so forth with the Registrar and thereafter, the Registrar is required to publish these declarations. The Registrar also maintains the Register of Political Parties.

Since the 2018 General Election, the FEO has deregistered 2 political parties and registered 4 additional ones. The 2 deregistered parties were HOPE and Freedom Alliance.

As at 01 November 2022, there were 9 existing and registered Political Parties with the FEO. These were:

1. All Peoples Party
2. FijiFirst
3. Fiji Labour Party
4. National Federation Party
5. New Generation Party
6. Social Democratic Liberal Party
7. The People's Alliance
8. Unity Fiji
9. We Unite Fiji Party

Political Party Workshops

The FEO in adhering to section 14 of the Electoral Act is required to hold meetings with political parties to update and discuss matters related to the administration of elections and campaign processes.

The FEO had organised various trainings, demonstrations and workshops for Political Parties during the Election cycle to build capacity and for party officials to better understand the electoral processes.

Below is a list of workshops, Forums and meetings that were organised for Political Parties:

	Event	Date	Venue
1.	Information session with Political Parties for compilation of FEO's Strategic Plan	05 July 2019	FEO Conference Room
2.	Meeting on Audit Guidelines	18 February 2021	FEO Confer-ence Room
3.	Election Preparation Update	24 September 2021	Livestream on FEO Facebook Page
4.	Briefing to Political Parties on preparation for 2022 General Election and Launch of Polling Agents Handbook	30 September 2021	Zoom Virtual Meeting
5.	Handing over of Voting Screens by NZEC	21 October 2021	Live Stream on FEO Facebook Page
6.	Meeting on Submission of Financial Disclosures	02 December 2021	Zoom Virtual Meeting
7.	Update on Preparation for 2022 General Election	21 February 2022	Zoom Virtual Meeting
8.	Launch of the Nationwide Voter Education and Voter Registration Drive	25 February 2022	Grand Pacific Hotel
9.	Meeting, Polling Venue Simulation and Awareness Session	18 March 2022	FEO Conference Room
10.	Stakeholders Forum	30 March 2022	Grand Pacific Hotel
11.	Electoral Processes Workshop	21 April 2022	Level 9 Conference Room, Suvavou House
12.	Launch of Candidates Handbook and Complaints Portal by Electoral Commission Chairperson	25 April 2022	FEO Conference Room
13.	Launch of Polling Venue Directory and Handover of Vehicles	30 June 2022	FEO Warehouse
14.	Political Parties Meeting	07 July 2022	FEO Conference Room
15.	Political Parties Meeting on Nominations Requirements	16 August 2022	Zoom Virtual Meeting
16.	Update on 2022 General Election	14 September 2022	Zoom Virtual Meeting
17.	META Training Session on how to effectively and responsibly use Facebook over an election period	06 October 2022	Zoom Virtual Meeting
18.	2022 General Election Logistics Workshop and discussion of Political Parties Itinerary and Mock Count Simulation	12 November 2022	Suva Civic Centre

Political Party Declarations

Under section 24 and 25 of the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act, 2013 all registered Political Parties and their individual Candidates were required to declare their assets, liabilities and income for stipulated periods.

Candidates were required to submit their declarations within 7 days of their Nomination whilst Political Party declarations were due 30 days before the date of the General Election. The requirement for publication of Candidates' disclosures was amended in 2021 which meant that the disclosures were no longer required to be published apart from declarations of assets, liabilities and so forth by political parties under Section 25(1) and (1A) of the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act, 2013. The FEO published the Political Party Declarations required under Section 25(1) on 24 November 2022.

Additionally, final disclosures pertaining to the 2022 General Election were due to be submitted by Candidates and Political Parties on 13 February 2023.

Polling Agent Accreditation

According to section 45 of the Electoral Act, Political Parties and Independent Candidates are allowed to appoint 1 Polling Agent to be present at any one time per Polling Station. Polling Agents were required to produce a completed "*Polling Agent Appointment Form*" at the polling station or observation area they were appointed to.

The Polling Agent Appointment Form was provided in soft copy version to all registered Political Parties who then had the responsibility of printing the form onto their letterhead and providing a copy of the same to any polling agent that was appointed by them. In addition, a Polling Agent's Handbook was designed and distributed by FEO to Political Parties on September of 2021.

The 2022 General Election also saw Polling Agents being authorised to make observations at various observation areas approved by the SoE. An itinerary was provided to all Political Parties pertaining to different electoral events that allowed Polling Agent access. Some of these events or observation areas included:

1. Ballot Paper Production;
2. Packing of sensitive material for Polling Day and Pre-poll at FEO Warehouse;
3. Packing of Postal Packages;
4. Verification of Postal Ballots;
5. National Results Centre; and
6. National Count Centre.

Nomination of Candidates

The nominations process is governed by section 26 of the Electoral Act and the eligibility requirements are outlined in section 56 of the Constitution. The nominations process commenced on 01 November 2022 and closed at 12pm on 14 November 2022. During the period of nominations, the FEO received nominations from 9 registered political parties and 2 Independent Candidates.

All nominating Political Parties were required to submit their nominations in the approved form and accompanied with a deposit of \$1,000 per Candidate. They were also required to submit 1 recent

passport size photo as well as a digital copy in JPEG or PNG format of 300 ppi, a copy of their birth certificate and a completed Police Clearance Form.

After receiving the completed Nomination Forms, the details of each Candidate were verified with the Chief Registrar's Office, Crime Records Office, Department of Immigration and the Official Receiver's Office before accepting the Candidate's Nomination.

Summary of Nomination Forms Received and Processed:

Political Party	No. Received	No. Rejected	No. Approved
FijiFirst	55	0	55
SODELPA	57	1 (2 withdrawn)	54
FLP	47	2	45
NFP	55	1	54
Unity Fiji	40	1(1 appealed)	39
The People's Alliance	58	3	55
We Unite Fiji Party	22	2	20
New Generation Party	5	0	5
All Peoples Party	15	1	14
Rajendra Prasad (Ind)	1	0	1
Ravinesh Reddy (Ind)	1	0	1
Total	356	11	343

Candidate Statistics by Gender and Age Group									
Gender	18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-Above	Total
Female		2	8	18	13	10	2	1	54
Male		13	25	51	103	86	10	1	289
Total	0	15	33	69	116	96	12	2	343



Candidate Stats by Party by Gender & Age Group										
PartyName	Gender	Age Cohort								Total
All Peoples Party			1		5	2	6			14
	Female						1			1
	Male		1		5	2	5			13
Fiji Labour Party			1	6	11	14	11	2		45
	Female			1	1	2	2			6
	Male		1	5	10	12	9	2		39
FijiFirst			3	10	10	16	15	1		55
	Female			3	1	1	4			9
	Male		3	7	9	15	11	1		46
National Federation Party			2	6	13	18	15			54
	Female			1	3	3	1			8
	Male		2	5	10	15	14			46
New Generation Party				1	1	2	1			5
	Female			1	1					2
	Male					2	1			3
Social Democratic Liberal Party			4	1	12	16	13	7	1	54
	Female		1		5	2		2	1	11
	Male		3	1	7	14	13	5		43
The People's Alliance				4	8	28	13	2		55
	Female			1	5	3				9
	Male			3	3	25	13	2		46
Unity Fiji			2	3	4	12	17		1	39
	Female			1	2	1	2			6
	Male		2	2	2	11	15		1	33
We Unite Fiji Party			2	1	5	7	5			20
	Female		1			1				2
	Male		1	1	5	6	5			18
IND- Rajendra Prasad	Male			1						1
IND- Ravinesh Reddy	Male					1				1
Total		0	15	33	69	116	96	12	2	343

National Candidates List Ball Draw

On 15 July 2021, the EC conducted a barrel draw on live television and approved 173 as the first number on the ballot paper for the 2022 General Election. There were 343 approved candidates for the 2022 General Election.

Pursuant to Section 36 of the Electoral Act the SoE conducted the National Candidate List Ball which was held on 16 November 2022 at the Suva Civic Auditorium. The draw was conducted live in the presence of the public including members of the diplomatic Corp, media, international observers, and political parties. The draw was aired live on both FBC, Fiji One television and also social media.

There were 343 white ping pong balls used in the draw (equal to the number of Candidates whose nominations were accepted) which were numbered from 173 to 515 and placed inside a specially designed barrel. Section 36 of the Electoral Act requires the Candidates names be announced in alphabetical order with the last name appearing before the first name. The SoE called out the number drawn for that announced Candidate name and this was projected onto the big screen at the Civic Auditorium.

The entire process was repeated until the numbers had been allocated to every Candidate. The National Candidates List showed the Candidate's number, their party symbol, name and their photograph. The National Candidates List was prepared and published in the Gazette and the daily newspapers the following day, as well as broadcasted on radio and social media. Copies of the National Candidates List were provided to the EC, registered Political Parties and their Candidates. The Voter Instruction Booklet also contained the National Candidates List and was widely distributed to all the voters prior to election day as well as handed to every voter as they entered the polling station to vote.



Ballot Paper Production and Management

The printing and production of the 2022 General Election Ballot Paper was one of the most important projects. After the issue of the writ, the Fijian Elections Office went into action to ensure that the 2022 General Election would be conducted in a timely manner.

Processes and procedures were in place to see that the printed Ballot Papers met the quality and security as established by the Fijian Elections Office and by the Electoral Act.

Given that the Ballot Paper plays an important role in deciding the next parliament, printing process and guidelines were made in line with international standards and practices. The Ballot Paper was printed by Star Printery, who had also printed the same in 2018 and 2014 General Election.

The role for the Ballot Paper Production Coordinator was to work together with the Supervisor of Elections, the Deputy Supervisor of Elections, the Director Corporate Service, the Electoral Commission, the departments within Fijian Elections Office such as Graphics Team, Operations, Command Center, Procurement, Legal, Internal Audit, Transport, Media, EMS team, Fijian Electoral Education Center, Human Resources, Finance and the Logistics team to ensure that the printing of the Ballot Papers for the 2022 General Elections was undertaken successfully and within the guidelines under the law and internal regulations.

The initial phase of the Ballot Paper Printing was to create a Standard Operating Procedure which would outline major events and milestones which will be important to ensure that the printing of the Ballot Papers is done successfully in accordance with the guidelines provided.

Milestones highlighted within the Standard Operating Procedure were:

- Specification;
- Design;
- Printing;
- Schedule;
- Destruction;
- Distribution;
- Reconciliation; and
- Reports.

For the 2022 Fiji General Elections, Fijian Elections Office had the following number of staff which would undertake their respective responsibilities to ensure that the printing of the Ballot Papers was completed within the strict quality targets and the deadlines.

The team consisted of a Ballot Paper Production Manager, 1 Ballot Paper Coordinator 2 Ballot Paper Officers, and 32 Ballot Paper Quality Assurance Assistants. The printing, collating and QA took 12 days to complete and staff worked in 8 hour shifts which was a 24 hour operation.

Summary of Ballot Papers printed for 2022 General Election.

Description	Numbers
Registered Voters	684,488
Polling Station	2069
Postal Ballot Papers	20,000
Pre-Poll Ballot Papers	106,300
Election Day Ballot Papers	668,850
Printing Duration	12 Days

International Relations

Electoral Assistance Received

The FEO received key electoral assistance through donation and direct in-kind resources from various countries and donor agencies. These forms of assistance were critical in assisting the FEO in the successful conduct of the 2022 General Election.

Country	Assistance Received
India	Four (4) Mahindra Utility Vehicles and Indelible Ink - \$570,531.88
New Zealand	Result Management Information System and DSoE Salary - \$293,461.43
UK	Election Visitor Program - \$12,809.16
UNDP	Leadership and Media Training - \$168,000 / Stakeholder Engagement on Electoral Education (Community Engagement Project) - \$416,243.52

Technical Advisors

As per the Strategic Plan (Pillar 2, Activity 2.1.3), the FEO engaged both long-term and short-term TAs from Australia and New Zealand. These TAs were based with the different Directorates and provided technical advice and knowledge sharing with the FEO staff.

The TAs also provided technical advice for support during the Election Period. These TAs were based with key departments as well as with the Divisional Offices. New Zealand's Bilateral support included topping up the salary for the DSoE.

Deployment Details of the Technical Advisors:

Country	Non-Election		Election	
	Number of Electoral Advisors	Based with	Number of Electoral Advisors	Based with
New Zealand	1	Training Operations	1	Training Operations
	1		2	
	1	EC	1	International Relations (EVP)
Australia	1	Operations	1	Operations
			2	Divisional Offices



International Election Observer Missions and Elections Familiarization Trips Attended by the FEO

Since the successful conduct of the 2018 General Election, the FEO was invited to participate in Election Observer Missions in the region and internationally. This presented the FEO with an opportunity for capacity building and familiarization for Senior Management of the FEO as well as for members of the EC. During these Missions the FEO has been able to build strong Pacific Regional and International Networks.

Timeline	Country	Mission / Election Event	Participation Details
May 2019	New Caledonia	Pacific Islands Forum Observer Mission to Provincial Elections	Attended by the then Legal Compliance Coordinator
April - May 2022	Australia	Australia Federal Election	Attended by the EC Chairperson and SoE
June - July 2022	Papua New Guinea	MSG Observer Group Mission to PNG General Election	Attended by the Manager Industrial Elections
June 2022	New Zealand	Tauranga By-Election	Attended by the EC Chairperson, SoE, Admin. Secretary EC, Manager Public Relations, Director IT and Manager Assets
July 2022	India	Familiarization Visit by the EC Chairperson	Attended by the EC Chairperson, Commissioner Kavita Raniga and SoE
October 2022	Vanuatu	Independent Observer (UNDP Supported)	Attended by SoE

Election Visitor Program

The Election Visitor Program ["EVP"] for the 2022 General Election was held from Monday 12 December to Thursday 15 December 2022. The FEO received approximately \$159,533.00 in funding from the United Nations Development Programme ["UNDP"] and the UK High Commission in Fiji. The FEO ran the EVP by forming an EVP Secretariat that was coordinated by Coordinator Special Projects, International Advisor (NZEC), Administrative Assistant, Photographer and Driver.

The FEO hosted a total of 34 participants from 11 Countries – Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, 1 representative from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems ["IFES"] as well as local participants from Fiji. A total of 35 participants had confirmed attendance, however, due to unforeseen circumstances 1 regional participant from Papua New Guinea and 1 local participant from Fiji were unable to attend.

Selection of the local participants was based on the submission of Expressions of Interest ["EoI's"] to the FEO over a 3 week period, these EoI's were screened based on merit, interest and the outcomes the participant wished to achieve from the program. The FEO received a total of 55 EoI's of which 21 were successful. There was a total of 14 Pacific Regional participants and 20 local participants. The International participants were all members or officers of EMB's in their respective countries. Local participants comprised of CSO representatives, School/Community Election Advocates, Faith based organization representatives, members of the Elections Disability Access Working Group as well as members of the general public.

The EVP commenced with Pacific Regional participants having a workshop on 12 December 2022

During this workshop the FEO displayed and simulated the voter registration, voting and counting process, as well as the postal voting process. After the arrival of all local participants on the same day, the Chairperson of the EC hosted a Welcome Dinner. On 13 December 2022 there was a whole day presentation session by FEO Senior Management and Project Owners on the processes of the FEO as well as for the conduct of the General Election.

On Election Day, the participants visited 3 Polling Venues – Vashist Muni Memorial Primary School in Navua, FEO Shed at Lower Ragg, Namadi Heights as well as the Fiji National Council for Persons with Disabilities Complex. The participants also visited the Command Centre, National Count Centre as well as the National Results Centre. The program concluded with an Election Night Dinner hosted by the Chairperson of the EC at the Tanoa Plaza. All participants dispersed on Thursday 15 December 2022.

Whilst the EVP was compact, it allowed for ample networking and ‘knowledge exchange’ opportunities between interested Fijians, regional electoral practitioners, FEO Senior Managers and the Electoral Commission. This was reflected in the participants comments and feedback in the end of program survey. This EV is the second EVP Fiji has hosted.

Media Accreditation

The media played a critical part in the execution of the 2022 General Election, as it was responsible for the dissemination of election information to a mass audience.

To ensure that the media disseminated the correct and relevant electoral information, the FEO came up with certain initiatives that would have enabled the media to be well versed with the electoral processes. This included the publication of the Media Handbook on 14 June 2022 which provided key electoral information to uphold the highest level of accuracy, impartiality, professionalism and compliance with the laws of Fiji while reporting on the 2022 General Election. Then on 01 July 2022 the FEO launched an eVuli Training platform which allowed media personnel to learn at their own pace. The training content was developed by IFES and consisted of 4 modules.

This online training was designed to increase participants knowledge of the electoral cycle, principles of effective and balanced election coverage and to explore the media’s role in countering electoral disinformation and hate speech. A total of 133 media personnel enrolled to this eVuli training. Later, on 08 August 2022 the FEO in collaboration with the Fijian Media Association launched the 2022 General Election Media Training. This 1 day training had 40 media personnel from Fiji that attended in person and other members of the Fijian Media Association attended virtually as well. Its main goal was to enhance reporting around elections and participants were also provided an opportunity to clarify any doubts from the Media Handbook or modules on the eVuli Training.

Although the initiatives mentioned above was for voluntary participation, the FEO noted that most local media personnel took part in it before being accredited to cover the 2022 General Election. As were the normal practice media personnel were required to complete the 2022 Media Accreditation Form before being granted an accreditation badge. For local media they were required to be registered with the Media Industry Development Authority before seeking accreditation with FEO. The international media were only required to complete the 2022 Media Accreditation Form.

For the 2022 General Election the FEO accredited a total of 410 media personnel which included 380 local media personnel and 30 international media personnel. Also, a total of 25 media organizations were accredited out of which 12 were international media organizations and 13 were local media organizations.

Observer Accreditation

For the 2022 General Election, the Minister Responsible for Elections invited the MOG which comprised of 3 Co-Chair countries, Australia, India and Indonesia who had signed their Terms of Reference on 18 October 2022. This was carried out in accordance to section 119 of the Electoral Act.

A total of 97 observers from 16 countries and 2 regional organizations were accredited by FEO. These observers were from Australia, India, Indonesia, Canada, France, the Federated States of Micronesia, Japan, Tonga, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, The Republic of Korea, United Kingdom, United States, Vanuatu, as well as the Melanesian Spearhead Group and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

The FEO prepared a comprehensive itinerary of events to indicate to the MOG the various electoral processes to be observed. This was apart from the request from MOG to observe other electoral events and having regular meetings with them to either inform or clarify with them the electoral activities and its processes.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of engagements with MOG for the 2022 General Election:

Date	Engagement
31/10/22	MOG observed the issue of Writ for the 2022 General Election by the President of the Republic of Fiji.
8/11/22	1st meeting with MOG Co-Lead and Team to discuss on the accreditation process, Observer itinerary and briefing schedule with FEO.
14/11/22	FEO organized the following briefing for MOG Team: • Legal. • ICT.
16/11/22	MOG observed the following: • National Candidates List Ball Draw. • Commencement of Ballot Paper Production.
17/11/22	MOG observed the following: • Delivery of 1st batch of ballot papers from Star Printery Ltd to FEO Warehouse. • Demo on storage of ballot papers at the FEO Warehouse. • Dispatch of postal ballot papers from the FEO Warehouse to the Postal Vote Processing Centre in Nasese.
18/11/22	FEO organized the following briefing for MOG Team: • Election Day. • Pre-Poll Voting. • Postal Voting. • Voter Registration. • Polling Venue. • Printing of Voter Instruction Booklet.
19/11/22	FEO organized the following briefing for MOG Team: • Administration of Political Parties. • Nomination of Candidates. • Withdrawal of Candidates. • Complaints. • National Candidate Ball Draw. • Voter Awareness. • Communication strategy.

21/11/22	FEO organized the following briefing for MOG Team: • Finance. • Training. • HR/Recruitment. • Command Centre/Quality Assurance. • Ballot Paper Production.
23/11/22	FEO organized the following briefing for MOG Team: • Warehouse function. • Packing of sensitive and non-sensitive election materials. MOG observed Presiding Officers [“PO”] and Assistant Presiding Officers [“APO”] Training sessions in the Central Division.
27/11/22	MOG observed the packing of sensitive elections materials for Pre-Poll.
28/11/22	MOG observed the final ballot papers delivery from the Star Printery Ltd to FEO warehouse.
30/11/22	FEO organized the following briefing for MOG Team: • Election Visitor Program. • Community Engagement Awareness. • Procurement.
03/12/22	MOG observed the packing of sensitive election materials for Election Day.
05/12/22 -09/12/22	MOG observed Pre-Poll Voting across the four (4) Divisions and visited 115 Pre-Poll venues.
07/12/22	MOG observed the verification of postal ballots and FEO weekly briefing with MOG.
07/12/22 – 08/12/22	MOG observed Hub Leader Training.
09/12/22	MOG observed the RMIS Training.
11/12/22	EC/FEO Briefing with MOG Co-Leads on the 2022 General Election.
12/12/22	MOG Briefing in which SoE presented on the election readiness of FEO to conduct the 2022 General Election.
14/12/22	MOG deployed a total of 90 observers across all the four (4) Divisions of the country to observe the Election Day processes which includes the voting and counting processes.
14/12/22 - 18/12/22	MOG observed the following: • Counting of Pre-Poll and Postal ballot papers at the National Count Centre. • Administrative movement of election materials at the Vodafone Arena. • Data entry of election results in the RMIS at the National Results Centre.
18/12/22	MOG observed the handover of the Final National Results Tally to EC.
19/12/22	MOG observed the return of Writ for the 2022 General Election by the President of the Republic of Fiji.

Section 115 of the Electoral Act Accreditation

Section 115 of the Electoral Act requires any person, entity or organisation that receives funding from a foreign government, inter-governmental, a non-governmental organisation or a multilateral agency to seek prior approval from the SoE on any activity they intend to conduct that relates to the General Election. These activities included debate, public forum, meetings, interviews, panel discussions as well as publishing of any electoral materials.

On 25 April 2022, the EC approved the following and published it on the FEO Website:

- Guideline for Applications under s115 of the Electoral Act 2014
- the Application for Approval under s115 of the Electoral Act 2014 Form

- Appeal process
- Appeal on Application for Approval to the Electoral Commission under s115 of the Electoral Act 2014 Form

For the 2022 General Election the information below highlights the number of applications that were received, approved and rejected by the FEO.

Application Received	Application Approved	Application Rejected
8	7	1

The 1st application was received on 30 October 2022 from the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. They had organized for a Fiji Young Women's National Convening, Intergenerational Dialogue, Perception Study of Leadership in Fiji Research, soft launch of Perceptions of Leadership in Fiji Research Report during the National Feminist Forum and distribution of the My Guide to Voting Booklet. Their target groups included women's network from across Fiji as well as transwomen, young women with disabilities and young women of both religious and non-religious beliefs. This application was approved on 30 October 2022.

The 2nd application was received on 31 October 2022 from the University of the South Pacific Students' Association that was running the 'Your Vote Matters' project that was aimed at scaling up the efforts around the 'Know Your Election' Campaign organized by FEO and UNDP. They had organized interactive workshops and panel/round table talanoa sessions. This application was approved on 01 November 2022.

The 3rd application was received on 31 October 2022 from the Fiji National University College of Humanities and Education. They had intended to conduct 3 education workshops targeting Fiji National University students on 04 November 2022, 10 November 2022 and 11 November 2022. The resources for these workshops included PowerPoint slides, handouts and role plays. In vetting these documents, FEO noted inconsistency in the election information to be relayed to the target group. As such, on 02 November 2022, FEO approved the application on a condition that the workshop to be held on 04 November 2022 is to be monitored by FEO. After monitoring this workshop FEO discovered that the election information disseminated during the workshop was inconsistent to the approved FEO electoral processes. This led to FEO rejecting the application on 07 November 2022 which resulted in the cancellation of the workshop to be held on 10 November 2022 and 11 November 2022.

The 4th application was received on 07 November 2022 from The Greenhouse Studio who had developed and intended to print voter education materials that were to be distributed to local CSOs that worked specifically with women, youth or LGBTQI. This application was approved on 10 November 2022.

The 5th application was received on 16 November 2022 from Rainbow Pride Foundation. They had organized for a one-day sports tournament to promote to Fijians to go out and vote in the 2022 General Election. This initiative was in partnership with Fiji Men's and Mixed Netball Association and included teams from the Central Division and spectators. This application was approved on 18 November 2022.

The 6th application was received on 17 November 2022 from The Greenhouse Studio again who had now printed voter education materials in Hindi and iTaukei languages. This application was approved on 23 November 2022.

The 7th application was received on 18 November 2022 from Fiji Women's Crisis Centre who had intended to produce banner, social media posters and t-shirts that will publicize the message 'Vote for Human Rights, Justice, Rule of Law, Integrity and Compassion'. This application was approved on 21 November 2022.

The Last application was received on 01 December 2022 from Stagetechn Fiji who had produced videos that had covered topics such as why women, youth and LGBTQI groups should vote, along with get-out-the-vote messaging to the general public. The aim of the campaign was to provide accurate, credible voter education messages aimed at targeted communities throughout Fiji. This application was approved on 02 December 2022.

Communications & Strategic Development

Public Relations & Stakeholder Engagement

The FEO adopted a new strategic approach in this election in the handling of public relations and engagement.

The Communications Strategy developed for the 2022 General Election was backed by 3 voter surveys which provided data-based analysis on turnout. The surveys were designed to give ground level opinions on voter perception, voter knowledge on elections, exposure to campaigns, voter ownership of the electoral process and the FEO's outreach penetration. Through the analysis derived from the surveys, structured outreach programs were developed relying on media with most prevalence for dissemination of key messages. Social media was fully exhausted for maximum reach.

New media strategies such as daily live updates on Facebook at 4pm turned out to be highly effective in engaging with voters. Considering this was the 3rd election, the media training was done on Moodle followed by a face to face workshop. Incentives were provided to encourage media personnel to undertake the training and as such less incorrect reporting by media was noted for this election. The team further enhanced the Media Itinerary for coverage of election activities adding in more demonstrations and walk-through events that enhanced transparency and provided clarity surrounding critical election processes.

Through effective media campaigns, the FEO recorded 200,000 voter engagements during the first Voter Registration Drive and Know Your Election [“KYE”] Campaign. Bonanza promotions were used as incentives and the FEO rolled out last minute registration drives using ‘rush’ techniques to attract voters.

The public relations strategy promoted direct engagement at the grassroots level and to this end the SoE and senior staff visited a number of villages and settlements to speak with voters while discussion forums and informal sessions with youths and women groups were also undertaken.

Overall, the public communications and marketing strategy resulted in 473,910 people voting with 0.7% invalid votes. More people voted in 2022 than in 2018 and invalid votes reduced. In order to capture our key target audiences (voters), and to ensure the successful delivery of critical information relating to the conduct of elections in Fiji, a multi-media and multi-lingual voter awareness approach was used based on 6 general themes:

- When to vote
- Where to vote
- How to vote
- All Fijians should vote
- General reminder for Election Day and Pre-Poll voters
- Come & Vote

Election Information Booklet

The Election Information Booklet [“EIB”] was produced in February 2022 as the primary awareness tool, containing all relevant electoral information for the voter. These included instructions on how to vote, illustrations of a standard Polling Station layout and pictorials, methods of voting, counting process, declaration of results and allocation of seats. The EIB was translated into iTaukei, Hindi, Rotuman, Banaban and Chinese. The information below highlights the distribution of the EIB across the country.

Total printed and distributed – 556,710 including:

- iTaukei – 189,630
- English – 228,600
- Hindi – 100,980
- Chinese – 7,500
- Rotuman – 15,000
- Banaban – 15,000

How to Vote Brochure

The EIB was supplemented with the How to Vote Brochure which contained information on voter registration, how the voter could check their Polling Venue, the steps of the voting process inside the Polling Station with the instructions on how to vote on its cover.

Total printed and distributed – 1,275,000 including:

- iTaukei – 300,000
- English – 750,000
- Hindi – 75,000
- Chinese – 7,500
- Rotuman – 15,000
- Banaban – 15,000

The EIB and How to Vote Brochure was distributed to every voter who attended the awareness session or came for registration services at any of the venues during KYE Phase 1 & 2 as well as during live outdoor broadcasts and outreach activities of the FEO. The FEO had continued to build on voter education during the pre-election period and intensified efforts from the beginning of 2022.

Voter awareness was carried out in different stages in the election year with each phase having its own targeted messaging to ensure that the relevant information was provided and that it was adequately timed for it to be more effective in calling people to action.

The Know Your Election Campaign Phase 1

The KYE Awareness campaign is the major voter awareness campaign conducted before a general election in Fiji.

The KYE was officially launched on 25 February 2022 by His Excellency the President of Fiji Ratu Wiliame Katonivere and the event was broadcasted live on FBC TV, Fiji TV and on the FEO Facebook page.

The 1st phase of the campaign ran simultaneously with the Nationwide Voter Registration Drive from 25 February to 14 April 2022. It was initially planned for 5 weeks but was later extended for another 2 weeks due to high demand.

Teams carried out awareness sessions in schools, villages and settlements and recorded 137,158 direct voter engagements.

The awareness sessions included a flip chart presentation on the electoral processes leading up to the 2022 General Election as well as general information about the voting process. Voters were also provided a copy of the EIB and a How to Vote Brochure at each awareness session.

As awareness ran concurrently with registration, the teams were deployed using the rural to urban approach, starting from the most remote villages and communities and working their way towards peri-urban and urban areas. Special attention was paid to Pre-Poll voting areas and awareness materials were distributed especially those in vernacular languages.

The EC Chair Mr. Mukesh Nand as well as other members were also involved in the voter outreach programs visiting schools, settlements and communities where they were able to speak directly with voters. They also held informal talanoa sessions with participants.

The SoE, Acting DSoE at the time and Director Operations also held similar sessions in the Central, Western and Northern Divisions.

The total budget for KYE/NRD was \$1,578,530.77.

Central	Western	Northern	Eastern
• 361 villages • 200 settlements • 68 schools • 86 business houses	• 300 villages • 90 settlements • 69 schools • 83 business houses	• 315 villages • 122 settlements • 69 schools	• 223 villages • 21 schools visited • 7 settlements

To complement KYE, the FEO ran a mass media campaign to educate voters on the 2022 General Election. These included daily advertising on radio and television, newspaper publications, banners, billboard advertising and Facebook.

The advertisements were based on key messages for the KYE Campaign:

- There will be a nationwide Voter Registration & Awareness Drive
- How to Register
- Get your Blue VoterCard
- Correct your Polling Venue
- Update your voter details
- VoterCard replacement
- How to Vote
- Ask for a Replacement Ballot Paper

Other messages:

- Grab your copy of the EIB
- Schedules [Time and locations where KYE/Nationwide Registration Drive teams would be]

As this was the very 1st extensive voter awareness campaign done at least 2 months ahead of the 1st possible Writ Day, it focused more on preparing Fijians in terms of ensuring that voters:

- Had enough information on the eligibility requirements for registration and how they could register
- Had a valid VoterCard with up-to date voter details
- Were assigned to a Polling Venue that was most convenient for them
- Knew how to mark their Ballot Paper correctly.

Radio	TV	Newspapers
4,230 spots 3,019 mentions on schedules, registration & VoterCard upgrade	643 spots	Newspaper wraps (25th & 26th Feb) 6-page weekly publications x 7 weeks

The media campaign also included outdoor broadcasts by radio stations at popular hotspots, banners, billboard and sponsored posts on Facebook.

During outdoor broadcast, the SoE also went on air from the venues to encourage voters to come out and access voter services or collect awareness materials.

Radio Station	Location/Venue	Station	Date/Time
CFL	Damodar City	All 5 stations	09 April 11am -2pm
	Damodar City		13 April 11am to 2pm
FBC	Rups Nakasi	4 Stations	26 February 10am-12pm & 2pm-4pm
	Challenge Plaza		08 April 2022, 3pm-7pm
	Damodar City		09 April 1pm-3pm & 5pm-7pm
	Hansons Makoi		13 April 2022 10am-12pm
	Damodar City		13 April 2022 3pm-5pm

Total voter engagement for the Nationwide Voter Registration Drive & KYE was 200,899.

Pre-Writ Voter Awareness

On 26 April 2022, the official Campaign Period had commenced with 26 May 2022 being the 1st possible Writ Day. While the Writ was not issued, the momentum needed to continue to keep voters engaged so from 01 June 2022, the FEO began an advertising campaign that ran on radio, television and social media.

The advertisements were based on 3 thematic areas:

- Campaign Period & Campaign Laws
- Candidates Eligibility & Candidates Handbook
- Eligibility for Postal Voting.

The key messages were designed to provide information that would:

- Assist stakeholders in preparing for the nomination period
- Educate voters and aspiring candidates on the campaign laws in Fiji
- Inform voters on who could apply for Postal Voting which open on the day the Election Date is announced.

Radio and Televisions spots were booked from 01 June till 30 November with CFL, FBC, Fiji TV and MaiTV.

The campaign was temporarily halted on 01 August due to the commencement of KYE Phase 2 during

which the radio and television spots were utilized for the KYE key messages. The campaign resumed from 04 September and continued until 30 October 2022 when the Election Date was announced.

Radio	TV
12,520 spots in total	1,804 spots in total

KYE Phase 2

A 2nd round of registration and awareness was conducted from 01 August to 03 September 2022 following delays in the announcement of the Election Date. KYE Phase 2 ran concurrently with the Nationwide Voter Registration drive.

Whilst rural and maritime areas were covered, the focus concentrated on the urban and semi-urban locations where majority of the voter population resides.

In this phase, the FEO took the approach of 'taking registration & awareness to the doorstep'. Teams were deployed to densely populated settlements, urban hotspots, popular locations in individual streets such as shops and canteens, supermarkets and sporting grounds. 60 teams were deployed for the 5 week exercise. Each team had 3 staff who were both trained in awareness and registration.

An A3 Poster outlining the steps of the voting process was used for awareness. As KYE Phase 1 had already extensively covered the electoral processes leading up to the election, Phase 2 focused primarily on what would happen inside the Polling Station. 1,169 villages, 555 settlements and 174 schools were covered with 43,102 direct voter engagements for KYE.

Key Messages for KYE Phase 2 were same as for the 1st phase with more emphasis on How to Vote and Upgrading to the latest Blue VoterCard.

Existing spots with the respective radio and television stations were used to push out messages and the overall campaign was boosted through social media. Weekly publications were done in the Saturday's Fiji Times and Fiji Sun for the schedules of where the teams were visiting as well as the hotspots. Daily schedules were posted on the FEO Facebook page.

Outdoor Broadcast

Date	Organization	Venue	Stations	Time
20 August	CFL	Tebara Plaza, Nakasi	All 5	10am to 1pm
	FBC	Shop & Save, Nabua	5 Stations	2pm-6pm
21 August	CFL	Hansons Supermarket Carpark, Makoi	All 5	10am to 1pm
	FBC	Laqere Market Car Park	5 Stations	10am-2pm
27 August	CFL	Nasinu Town Council Carpark, Valelevu	All 5	9am to 12pm
28 August	FBC	Damodar City	5 Stations	10am-2pm
02 September	CFL	Rups Plaza, Nakasi	All 5	11am to 2pm
	FBC	Damodar City	5 Stations	4pm-7pm
03 September	CFL	Rups Plaza, Nakasi	All 5	9am to 12pm
	FBC	Damodar City	5 Stations	4pm-7pm

KYE Bonanza Promotion

The FEO made use of a Bonanza promotion as incentive to encourage voters to register, update their details and upgrade to the latest Blue VoterCard ahead of the election.

The promotion ran twice and coincided with the KYE Phase 1 and Phase 2 Campaigns respectively. Appropriate Terms and Conditions were drawn up by the FEO legal team for the Bonanza and published on the FEO website. Marketing was conducted primarily on social media and radio.

	Duration	Amount	No. of winners	Date of Draw
KYE Bonanza	25 February -14 April 2022	\$30,000	300	20 April, 2022
KYE Bonanza 2	30 July- 03 September 2022	\$10,000	100	09 September 2022

The draws were conducted electronically in the presence of a Police Officer and were broadcasted live on Facebook. The full list of winners were also posted on Facebook as well as on the FEO website.

Media Training

With this being the third election under the current electoral system, the FEO carried out its Media Training online via the eVuli platform, where members of the media could sign up and participate at their convenience. The training was rolled out on 01 July 2022, and to further enhance engagement in the process, the training was also opened up to journalism students.

As an incentive for media personnel to complete the training, an 'End of Training' Quiz was also set up and prizes were awarded to the highest scorers of the quiz. This project was carried out in 2 phases:

Phase 1: Journalists/Media organizations (01 July - 31 July)

All local journalists and personnel from media houses accredited to cover the 2022 General Election were invited to participate in this training. A total of 19 Journalists participated in the end of training quiz. As an incentive, the FEO gave out 1 laptop, 1 smartphone and 2 return tickets to Singapore as prizes to the top 4 scoring journalists.

Phase 2: Journalism students (01 August - 31 August)

The training and quiz were open to all local journalism students or any student in a related field. By the time the Election Date was announced, 92 had participated in the End of Training Quiz.

FEO Media Events: Writ to Writ

The FEO conducted 102 press conferences from January 2022 until the end of the 2022 General Election. These were vital in order to engage with mainstream media and propagate key messages for voters and other stakeholders. All press conferences, demonstrations, walk-through events and announcements were also broadcasted live on the FEO Facebook page.

During the Writ period, the FEO, in its attempt to be more inclusive, had a sign language interpreter for all important press conferences and events.

A total of 42 press releases were issued in order to update the media on FEO activities during the Writ period. Accredited media were also invited or allowed access to the following key events:

- Issuance of the Writ
- Nomination of Candidates
- National Candidates List Ball Draw

- Printing of Ballot Papers
- Shredding of spoilt Ballot Papers and offcuts
- Packing of sensitive material (Pre-Poll and Election Day)
- Dispatch of Ballot Boxes to the Divisions
- Receipt/verification of Postal Ballots
- Launch of Pre-Poll voting
- Election Day voting
- Counting of Pre-Poll and Postal Votes (National Count Centre)
- Entry of provisional results (National Results Centre)
- Data flush and entry of final result (National Results Centre)
- Handover of Final National Results Tally
- Seat Allocation
- Return of Writ

FEO updates on Election Day were carried live by the national TV news services Fiji One News and FBC News. This was in addition to live Facebook videos run by other news organizations as well as the FEO's own social media accounts.

A Tentative Media Itinerary was circulated to all media on 04 May 2022 to give enough time for media organizations to prepare for their own election coverage.

Accredited journalists were added to an existing media emailing list and invites were sent ahead of the events while the same was posted on Facebook so anyone could tune in at the given time.

4pm Live Updates by the SoE

A new feature on the PR front of the election was the daily 4pm Live Update by the SoE on Facebook during the Writ period. This was an informal approach to keep Fijians updated on the electoral activities that were taking place that day as well as to give out important reminders and information. The live update was also an opportunity for the SoE to answer common queries that the FEO was receiving and also give clarifications on pertinent issues that were being covered in the media or were being discussed on social media.

The 4pm live updates began on the day the Writ was issued and continued until the announcement of results. A sign language interpreter joined the SoE for all the updates and the friendly rapport between the two made the announcements more interesting and livelier to watch and definitely kept the viewers engaged.

Media Monitoring

Media monitoring is critical in terms of ensuring that the correct information is circulating in the public domain and to this end the Public Relations team since 2021 made it a point to have a stringent monitoring routine in place to update management on the coverage surrounding elections in the media as well as on FEO's activities in the lead up to the election. A Viber group was created for the same as it was the most convenient option.

During the Writ period, the Command Centre took up the role of media monitoring and they did so until the end of the election. Articles were vetted against information released by the FEO and clarifications and corrections were issued where necessary.

Local newspapers, television, news websites and social media accounts of news organizations were monitored as well as radio during the Writ period. Media Monitoring also included international coverage of the 2022 General Election as well as popular social media pages.

Writ to Writ: Key Messages

The key messages going out to the public were strategically placed across different phases in the election year and during the Writ period. For example, information on campaign laws, eligibility for postal voting and voter registration were covered thoroughly in the pre-writ period.

Following the announcement of the Election Date on 30 October 2022, the FEO used all available avenues including paid advertisements to disseminate information focusing heavily on:

- How to vote
- Ask for a replacement Ballot Paper
- Text 1500 to check your Polling Venue
- The Election is on
- Postal Voting Applications open/ To apply for Postal Voting
- Nominations open
- VoterCard Replacement
- Process for Objections
- Visit the FEO website
- Reminder- Postal Applications close on
- National Candidates List is out
- Get your free copy of the VIB
- Election Day is near
- Come and vote
- Iam Voting because Iam Fijian
- Look out for the Pre-Poll Sign
- Pre-Poll Schedule
- Media Blackout
- Election Day is tomorrow/today
- Download the FEO Results App

Radio Advertising

Radio is an effective platform to reach the masses especially in rural and maritime communities. In the pre-election period, radio was primarily used to push out messages on recruitment of Election Officials and voter registration and from 30 October onwards, the advertisements reflected the key messages relevant to the Writ period.

In the 50-day period, FEO utilized the following spots:

Fiji Broadcasting Corporation

Type of advertisement	Number of ads/spots
30 second Radio advertisements	4,560 advertisements

The FEO had a radio sponsorship with FBC for 6 months from February of 2022 which expired in July and was later renewed until 31 December 2022. As part of the package the FEO received a total of 60 mentions per day across 5 of its stations in addition to 103 advertisement spots per week. The 6-month package cost \$30,360VIP.

The FEO also purchased 10-minute spots on Radio Fiji one and Radio Fiji Two for announcement of the Pre-Poll schedule from 05 - 09 November, 2022. The announcement aired at 6.30am. Only FBC had been able to accommodate the 10-minute block spot that was necessary to read out the full schedule.

Communications Fiji Limited

The FEO engaged media and publication houses on 'package basis' deals to ensure value for money as well as high levels of engagements.

Outdoor Broadcasting ["OB"]

OBs were effective in creating hype on radio as well as attracting people to FEO tents where they could meet popular radio personalities and access voter services and awareness materials. When the announcers would go on air for their update, the PR team did live crossovers on Facebook so both platforms were used simultaneously to get the message out. During the Writ period, the FEO increased its OBs during which the PR team as well as Divisional teams distributed VIB and election merchandise such as caps, tote bags and bumper stickers.

OBs were also done on Election Day by both CFL and FBC on all of their radio stations to encourage people to come out and vote.

Date	Organization	Venue	Stations	Time
30 October	FBC	Damodar City	4 Stations	2pm-5pm
31 October	CFL	Rups Plaza, Nakasi	All 5	10am-2pm
	FBC	Damodar City	4 Stations	
26 November	CFL	Nadi Dais	All 5	2pm to 5pm
02 December	FBC	Suva VSC	4 Stations	4pm to 7pm
03 December	CFL	Damodar City	All 5	3pm to 6pm
09 December	FBC	Sugar City Mall, Lautoka	4 Stations	3pm to 6pm
10 December	CFL	Damodar City	All 5	3pm to 6pm
14 December	CFL	Damodar City	All 5	10am to 1pm
	FBC	Rups Nakasi	4 Stations	9am to 1pm & 2pm to 6pm

Television Advertising

Type of advertisement	Number of ads/spots
30 second Radio advertisements	3,240 advertisements *607 announcer mentions

All television advertisements for the 2022 General Election – including the 5-minute educational videos were produced in-house by the FEO.

The Public Relations team has a camera operator/photographer as well as a videographer who was able to shoot and edit video advertisements.

For all major campaigns, the FEO produced its own content for national TV broadcasts as well as for social media promotions. Existing staff were used as talent in all video productions. All scripts were also written in-house with multiple layers of vetting and approvals. A marketing strategy used for this election was getting rugby players from the Fiji Sevens Men's and Women's team to do FEO advertisements with Jerry Tuwai among other prominent players endorsing elections messages from registering as a voter to giving instructions on how to vote. The FEO is now fully in control of all video content, which will be vital for future Election coverages.

The information below outlines the number of advertisements, and from which commercial service provider, by medium.

Fiji Broadcasting Corporation

Type of advertisement	Number of ads/spots
30 second TV advertisements	566 spots

Fiji Television Limited

Type of advertisement	Number of ads/spots
30 second TV advertisements	446 spots

MaiTV Limited

Type of advertisement	Number of ads/spots
30 second TV advertisements	246 spots

The FEO also produced five-minute educational videos called KYE segments which aired every night on Fiji TV and FBC TV during prime-time viewership. Following the issue of Writ, the 4 videos played over 20 days. On Fiji TV it was just before the 6pm news and on FBC, it aired before the 7pm news. The subjects were:

Key dates and events in the electoral process for:

- Postal Voting
- Pre-Poll Voting
- Election Day Voting

Live coverage of FEO Events on Television

The following events were broadcasted live on both FBC and Fiji TV:

- Launch of the Know Your Election Campaign- Phase 1
- Issue of Writ
- National Candidates List Ball Draw

The events were also live streamed on the FEO Facebook page.

Radio and Television Talkback Shows

The SoE as well as other senior staff of the FEO went on talkback shows 11 times during the Writ period to raise awareness. On radio, listeners were able to call and directly ask questions and get clarifications.

Talkback Show	Platform	Language	Date	Guest(s)
For the Record	TV	English	11 December 06 November	SoE
Close up	TV	English	06 November	SoE
Straight Talk	Website	English	01 December	SoE
Na Vakekeli	Radio	iTaukei	01 December	Director Operations
Drishtikon	Radio	Hindi	29 November 22 November	SoE
Speak Your Mind	Radio	English	29 November	Manager Legal & CCEI Coordinator
Na Ketekete Nei Nau	TV	iTaukei	23 November	Director Operations & Political Parties Engagement Officer

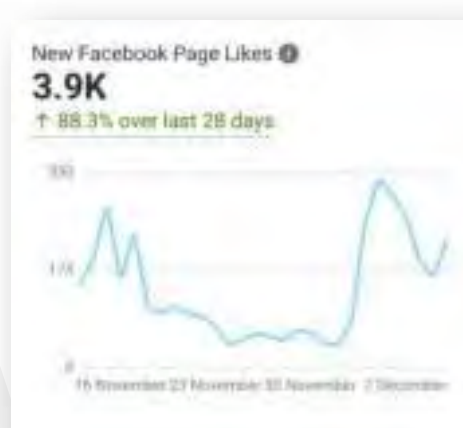
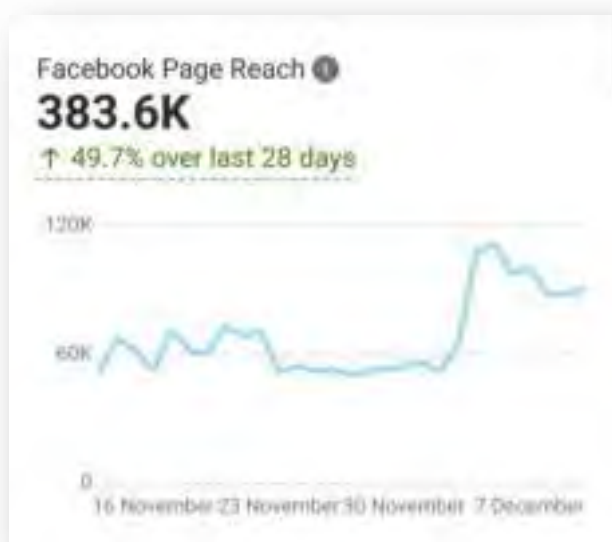
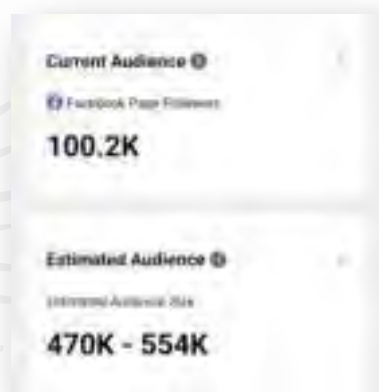
Aaina	Radio	Hindi	22 November	SoE
Breakfast @FijiOne	TV	English	22 November	SoE

Social media

In the Pre-Election Voter Survey undertaken by the FEO, it was found that 56% of the voting population relied on social media for election information. The FEO capitalized on this, to get information out to people especially the young and the middle aged.

The FEO primarily used Facebook being the most common social media platform used in Fiji, as was revealed through the Voter Survey. The FEO Facebook page has 100,000 followers and an estimated audience of over 400,000.

As marketing on Facebook was more cost effective, the FEO invested into sponsoring posts that reached thousands of Fijians. Meta's Ad Centre allowed the team to run effective online campaigns as well as monitor its success.



To further expand its social media reach, the FEO launched its TikTok page on 03 November 2022 and the first video had over 139,000 views.

As misinformation and fake news are common on social media, the FEO had reached out to both organizations ahead of the election and worked with them to manage engineered disinformation as well as misinformation during the election.

Digital Screens & Billboards

- Between 01 July till 30 November 2022, the FEO had content displayed on 4 digital screens with 100 spots on every screen per day.
- The FEO also erected a billboard at the St. Stephens premises, a prominent location within Suva City for awareness.
- As a final push before elections, the FEO procured spots on 6 digital screens with 15 second advertisements being displayed 1,440 times per day on every screen. This commenced on 09 December and continued till 12 December, 2022.

FEO Website

For this election, the FEO revamped its website feo.org.fj and re-launched it with the KYE campaign on 25 February 2022. The website includes disability friendly features. Users with visual impairments can increase the size of the font or even enable an automated readout of the text on the page.

The website was designed to operate as an information hub for the 2022 General Election and for this purpose new webpages were created to allow users to easily navigate and access all important information related to a topic on the same link. The website content was further expanded since the 2018 General Election to have more information readily available for stakeholders.

Lavetiviti

The Lavetiviti is a periodic publication by the FEO to update stakeholders on electoral activities and events. It was published quarterly during the non-election years and monthly in 2022. Between 2018 and the 2022 General Election, 18 issues of the newsletter were published on the FEO website and shared on social media.

On the day the Writ was issued, the Lavetiviti containing important timeliness leading up to the election, was distributed at the event. The FEO released its 25th Issue on 13 December, just before Election Day.

E-Talk

This was a 5-minute segment featuring conversations with the SoE which was published on social media. It followed a talkback show setup in which the SoE was interviewed on the electoral process or on pressing issues related to the election where clarifications were needed. A member of the PR team hosted the segment. 8 episodes were released in 2022.

ENews

Elections can be a very technical area so apart from informing stakeholders on what was happening it was also critical that individual processes were broken down and explained in layman's terms so a wider audience could be kept abreast with electoral activities.

The ENews which is short for Election News is a video segment that was produced periodically during the election year and then weekly once the Writ was issued. It followed a news bulletin format and provided updates and explanations on various events and activities that were undertaken as the election timeline progressed in the lead up to 14 December. The ENews was posted on the FEO Facebook page on

every Friday afternoon after the Writ was issued.

A total of 16 ENews episodes were produced in 2022 and the last one aired on Facebook on 23 December wrapping up the results and return of the writ.

New Initiatives:

Voter Survey

In line with international trends in elections, the FEO carried out 2 voter surveys ahead of the 2022 General Election.

The Pre-Election Voter Survey was conducted between 21 January to 11 February 2022. Findings from this survey shaped the KYE campaign in terms of the strategy for delivering voter awareness as well as the design of key messages.

The survey had asked voters on whether they were on the latest Blue VoterCard, if their residential address and voter details were up-to-date, their preferred medium for receiving election information, voter behavior in terms of whether people verify information on social media and their interest in politics, in reading manifestos and voting in the 2022 General Election. The survey had also posed perception questions that sought to gauge voter confidence in the electoral process.

9,576 responses were analyzed following the data validation process.

The FEO followed up with another voter survey in August to gauge voter preparedness ahead of the election and identify if there were any gaps in voter awareness or access to voter services. This was after a comprehensive nationwide registration and awareness drive had already been completed.

For the Election Readiness Survey, 8,154 responses were received.

The questions asked respondents if they knew that an election was going to happen soon, if they knew how to vote, if they were aware of all political parties, if they had come across material from the FEO and so forth. The results identified trends for the 2022 General Election and possible opportunities for parties and candidates.

To an extent, the Communications Strategy for this election was also somewhat shaped by the Voter Turnout & Survey Report following the 2018 General Election which had provided analysis on the turnout trends by age, gender and geographical location. The Voter Survey had also revealed insightful trends that were later incorporated into awareness. For example, according to the voter survey, the most common reason for not voting in 2018 was that voters had moved and had not updated their residential address. Therefore, the FEO since the beginning of 2022, pushed out messages to urge voters to Check and Correct their Polling Venue.

KYE Quiz

The KYE quiz competitions were a popular feature in the non-election year as well as during the build up to the election to engage with young voters.

- First quiz held on 15/09/2020 – 256 teams
- Since then 11 quiz competitions – 12,083 teams in total

The FEO wrapped up the quiz competition series with the last Quiz on 27 November 2022.

I VOTED Sticker

Another new initiative for the FEO was the I VOTED Sticker which was handed to every voter as they exit the Polling Station after voting.

The idea behind this was to instill a sense of patriotism in having participated in the democratic process and was something for voters to put on with pride. Fijians posed with the sticker after they voted, they shared the photos on social media and that was what the FEO had hoped for with this initiative.

Election Channel

For the 1st time in Fiji, an election management body had run its very own election channel in the lead up to a general election. The FEO partnered with Walesi and launched Channel 14 on 22 November 2022. For the next 26 days, the FEO ran all its voter awareness advertisements, 5-minute educational videos and election documentaries on the free to air channel. The FEO also produced specialized material such as a detailed demonstration of the counting process that premiered every night at 7pm and was designed to enhance transparency and build confidence in the election process.

Prior to Election Day, the FEO displayed the National Candidates List in video format on the election channel as this was a more cost-effective method for display as opposed to procuring billboards.

A TV Guide was developed for the Channel and shared on Facebook.

Since its launch until the handover of final results, FEO press conferences and announcements were also broadcasted live on the channel.

The total cost incurred for this initiative was \$25,000VEP.

Walesi is available in majority of the local households since the nation switched to digital television. The FEO noted that advertising on media platforms is an expensive feat and investing into a channel that was fully dedicated to the election allowed the FEO to run as many advertisements and awareness material as necessary with full flexibility and opportunity to occupy primetime spots at a fraction of the cost.

Walesi Timetable

Channel 14: TV Guide	
6.00 am	Voter Awareness
9.00 am	National Candidates List Display
10.00 am	Know Your Election segment
12.00 pm	National Candidates List Display
1.00 pm	E-Talk
2.00 pm	Documentaries
3.00 pm	National Candidates List Display
4.00 pm	Voter Awareness
5.00 pm	TikTok Hour
6.00 pm	National Candidates List Display
7.00 pm	Special Segment: Election Count Process
8.00 pm	Know Your Election segment
8.30 pm	Voter Awareness
9.00 pm	National Candidates List Display

10.00 pm	Voter Awareness
11.00 pm	National Candidates List Display
12.00 am	Ball Draw National Candidates List Display

Centre for Credible Election Information

The CCEI was established on 13 January 2022 as a tool to counter misinformation, fake news and disinformation before and during the election. It had 2 staff based within the PR team and a web developer. A website and Facebook page were created through which the CCEI performed its functions.

CCEI Objectives

The CCEI was also mandated to provide credible election information to the general public. The following 4 objectives describes the scope of activities undertaken by the CCEI during the 2022 General Election:

Objective 1: Produce and publish information on the 2022 General Election.

Objective 2: Support the FEO's publications framework in terms of dissemination of credible election information.

Objective 3: Actively provide clarifications and responses to information that is either misleading or incorrect in relation to the election processes.

Objective 4: Work with agencies to remove misinformation from various platforms including the application of section 144 of the Electoral Act 2014.

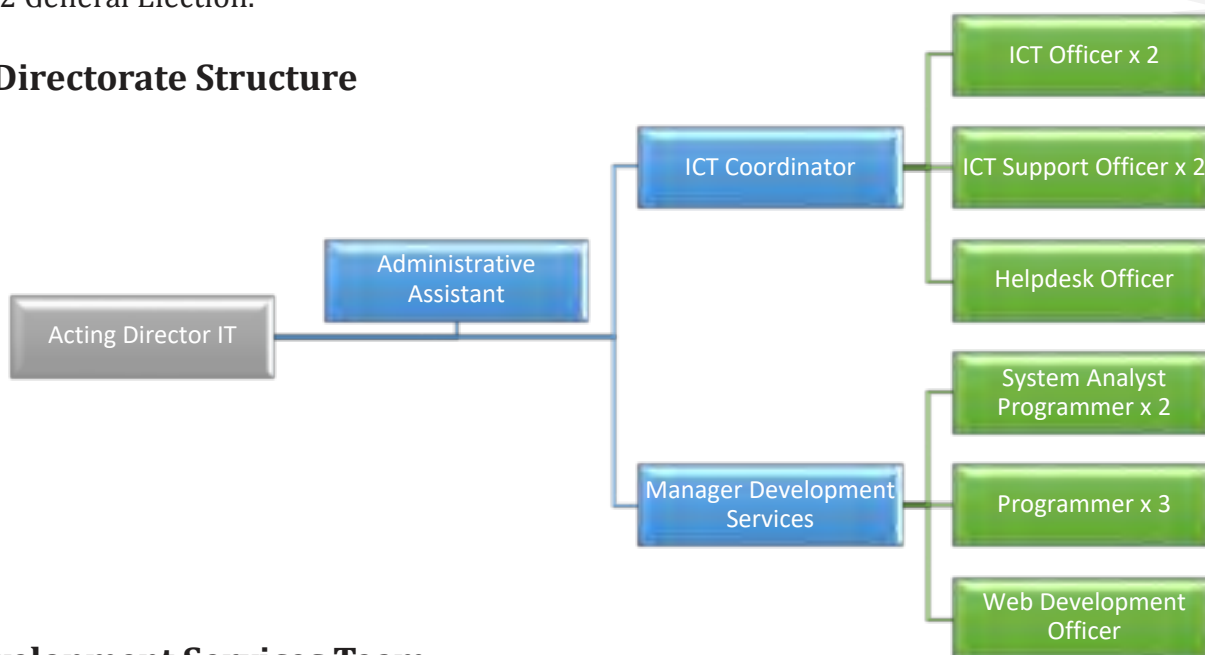


Information Technology [“IT”] Directorate

The IT Directorate was formally activated in August 2021 which consisted of the 2 streams – Development Services and ICT Department. This team was initially led by the SoE until May 2022 when the Acting Director IT role was handed over to the Manager ICT Infrastructure.

The IT Directorate played a vital role in the design and development of IT based solutions of the modern era to facilitate the work of the FEO. The IT Directorate also carried out hardware maintenance, networking solutions and provided technical support throughout the year until the successful completion of the 2022 General Election.

IT Directorate Structure



Development Services Team

The Development Services team within the IT Directorate was responsible for and supported all websites, web portals, web and desktop applications, specialized software's built for the FEO, mobile applications and everything related to software development and programming. This team worked on the following projects in preparation for the 2022 General Election.

Online Recruitment Management System (ORMS)

An online recruitment web portal was developed in 2021 and hosted on the cloud platform which could be accessed by anyone on the internet. All FEO vacancies were advertised on this web portal and interested applicants could register themselves and apply for any 1 of the vacancies that was listed. This new service brought in a change in how applicants could easily find out about vacancies in the FEO and submit their applications. With the availability of this new service, applications were received quicker and communications between FEO and the applicant via email could be done with ease. The biggest difference was the reduction in application and position assignment processing time.

Since the activation of the <https://jobs.feo.org.fj> web portal the FEO has advertised and received the number of applications as shown below:

	Vacancies	Applications		Total
		Submitted	Not Submitted	
Normal Positions	55	4,898	8,522	13,420
Election Positions	2	4,157	1,900	6,057
Total	57	9,055	10,422	19,477

Inventory and Asset Management System (IAMS)

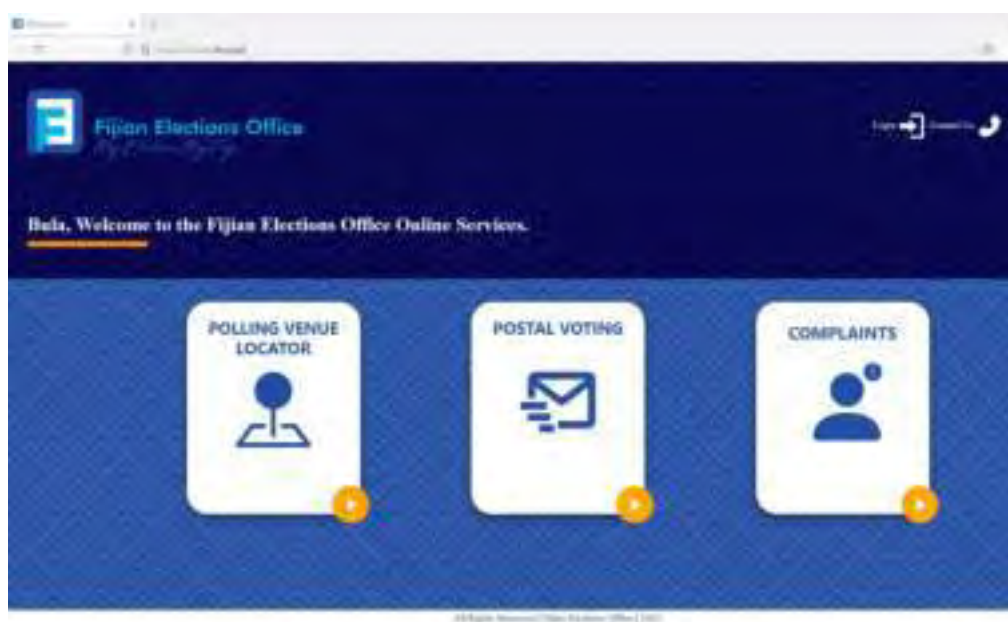


The IAMS or Inventory and Asset Management System was developed by FEO programmers and USP Students as part of their study project and practical assignment in 2020-2021 and fully deployed for production use in 2022. This product was solely designed and developed for the FEO Warehouse Team to manage the stock and transfer of items. The warehouse team were trained on the characteristics of the web application and how to use it. The IAMS Web Application was hosted on a local server at the FEO Server Room and it was only accessible over the FEO Network or via Virtual Private Network ["VPN"] Access.

To date, the Warehouse Team have been successfully using this system and it was also used at the 4 Divisional Offices during the Election period in relation to the transfer of items from the main warehouse to the Divisions.

Site Address: <http://feo-iams-01.feo.org.fj/Account/Login?ReturnUrl=%2F>

Online Services Portal



An online web portal was developed and hosted online on the cloud platform (<https://services.feo.org.fj>) providing the following services:

1. **Polling Venue Locator** – this service was used to locate the voter's Polling Venue which also had a google map marking out the Pre-Poll, Polling Day and Voter Service Centre locations.

2. **Postal Voting** – this service had 2 sections – application download and application submission. Any Voter that opted for Postal Voting had to use this platform whereby the voter could download the application form, fill in the required details and then submit their Postal Voting application.
3. **Complaints Portal** – this platform was specially designed and developed for voters to submit in their complaints and issues regarding any electoral process. All submissions on this portal was managed and handled by the Administrative Secretary in the Executive Department.

e-Vuli – FEO Online Learning Management System



With the formation of the Training and Development Unit [“TDU”] an important and state of the art system was also introduced in the FEO – Online Learning Management System. This online platform was developed and designed using Moodle which is a free open source learning management system. This learning platform was established and made available in production in 2021. The TDU staff were trained on the platform and once completed, the TDU managed all the online courses till to date. This new learning platform proved to be very effective in rolling out trainings especially during the Covid-19 period where staff used to work from home but yet they were able to connect via VPN.

The initial setup was hosted in house within the FEO Office network and later relocated to the public facing cloud platform as more courses were being scheduled on the online platform for internal, external staff and stakeholders.

The implementation of such a solution really had a positive outcome transitioning from face to face to an online method of study which gave participants the flexibility to do it at your own pace, time and location.

The Site address was: <https://evuli.feo.org.fj/>

Elections Official Recruitment System [“EORS”] – Upgrade

The EORS desktop application was again being used in the field recruitment drives in 2021 and 2022. Some changes were made to the application as requested by the Recruitment Team in HR. The field setup and solution had worked perfectly without any issues and the HR Team were able to successfully conduct the recruitment of Elections Officials as they had planned.

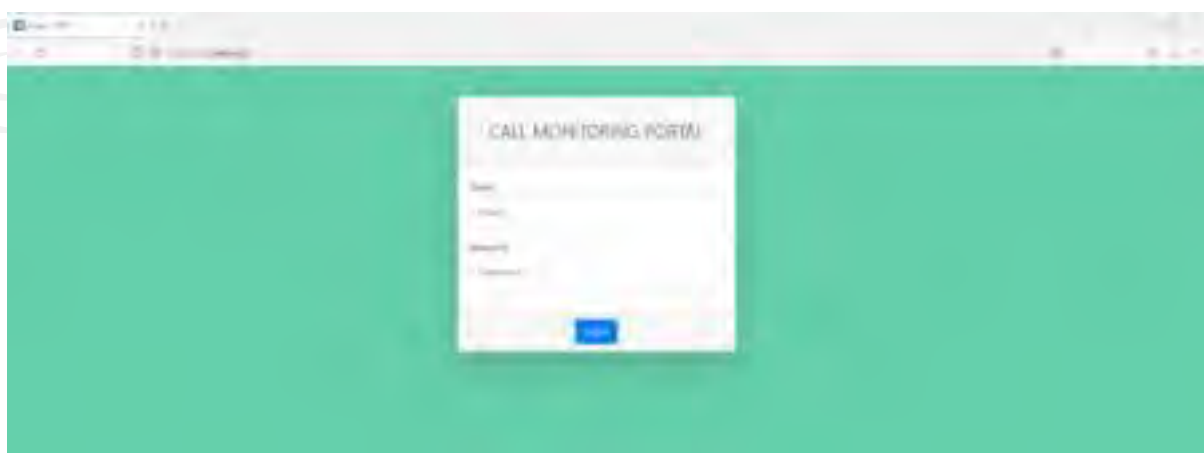
EVR Document Manager



A new document uploader and viewer was built whereby the EVR Team could scan and upload all the forms received at the VSC's. Previously all forms were kept as hard copies and a special project was scheduled just to scan and make soft copies of the forms. With the implementation of this web portal, staff at the VSC's could easily upload and also conduct search on any voter and their previous records.

This web portal was hosted locally and not available publicly on the internet - <http://rmis-test.feo.org.fj:8184/>

Call Monitoring Portal (CMP)



A web based online portal was designed and developed to manage the calls made to Elections Official regarding their availability, verify voters during data cleaning, and so on. This platform was built basically to assist and handle projects that required large number of calls to external stakeholders and keeping a record on the response status and outcome. This application was used more by HR and EVR Team.

The web portal was hosted on an existing cloud server on Azure and the site was created as a sub domain – <https://cmp.feo.org.fj>

Central Processing Centre [“CPC”] Portal

With the introduction of a new function and department (CPC) in the Ballot Paper Count and Results tabulation process, a new web portal was developed to assist in the managing of ballot boxes, ballot papers and Protocol of Results [“PoR”] after Election Day when counting and results processing had started. This platform actually showed a User on where a particular item is between Logistics, CPC,

National Count Center and National Results Centre.

Since all items was labeled with barcodes the movement of items could easily be done using barcode scanners. All staff using this system were fully trained before it was deployed into the LIVE environment.

A dedicated standalone server was used on site and hosted at the National Results Centre. A secondary server was also available for backup. The CPC Platform had a dedicated network of its own which was linked between Vodafone Arena and FMF Gymnasium.

Election Management System [“EMS”]- updated



The EMS that was developed and used in 2018 was again used in 2022 with upgrades and enhancements done on the features of the system as required for the different projects. Updates were done on Polling Venues, Postal Module, Logistics Module, Candidate and Party Registration and Voter List with the new information available for the 2022 General Election.

This system was hosted locally and only accessible on the FEO Office network. Access to the EMS Web Portal from a remote location was provided over a VPN Connection. These were to offices such as Area Office, Logistics Area at Vodafone Arena, Training Sessions and staff working from home.

The Site Address: <http://feoems01.feo.org.fj:81/Authentication/Login>

FEO Website – updated



A complete overhaul was done on the FEO Website <https://www.feo.org.fj> The website was given a completely new look and was transformed into a very modern and professional website. The update included balloon site links and popups, registered voter number displays and so on.

A new server was built and allocated for this website on the Azure cloud platform which had all security

enhancements applied and was scaled up during the Writ to Writ period for performance.

The new look website was officially launched at the National Voter Registration/KYE Launch in 2022.

Birth Registration Number [“BRN”] Application

During the voter registration projects in 2021 and 2022, there was a requirement for voters to bring in their birth certificates since there was a change in voter name registration as it was supposed to be exactly the same as on the birth certificate. Adding to this was the high number of requests due to the financial support provided by the Fiji Government to families during the Covid-19 pandemic whereby the voter ID was required when applying for financial assistance.

The FEO held meetings with Births, Deaths and Marriages [“BDM”] Registry and were able to obtain the complete birth registration records and then developed a desktop application through which a user could easily search for a particular person’s birth registration number.

This search desktop application was installed on all EVR Kit laptops and this enabled the registrations staff to be able to search BRN for a particular voter and get their EVR details updated easily. It also lightened the burden on the voter in terms of bringing in their birth certificates as most voters had problems in obtaining their birth certificates.

The FEO also signed up with Digital Fiji on their Data Exchange Platform to access latest and updated data from BDM on a scheduled timeframe. With this service and access in place, the FEO now has much more information related to a voter which helps in updating of voter details and maintaining a more credible National Voter Record.

CCEI Website



A new section was introduced within the Communications and Public Relations Department to handle credible information and respond against fake news. A website was developed especially for this platform where correct information related to Election was being posted and credible information displayed in response to any fake news.

This platform acted as the virtual hub for all electoral and election related information.

A new domain was registered and a dedicated server was provisioned and built on the Azure Cloud platform to host the new website. A new email domain was also created for this platform.

Site Address: <https://www.ccei.org.fj>

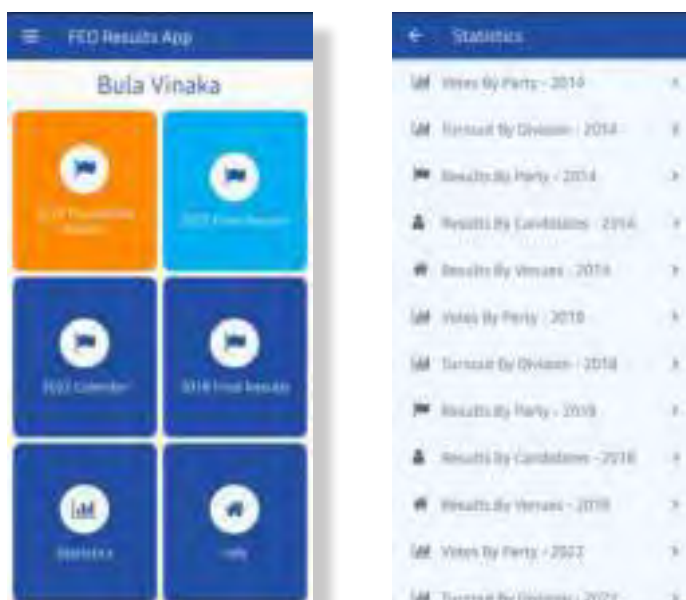


Presiding Officers [“PO”] – Mobile App and Website

A new solution was introduced in the 2022 General Election for the transmission and delivery of data and information from the Polling Venues on Election Day. A mobile application and a linked web portal were developed for the sole purpose of tracking the progress of opening of polling venues, attendance of staff with the option of taking photos of the PoR and submission up till the end of day closure of the venue.

The Hub Leaders were provided access to the website in which they could view the status of each polling venue all throughout Election Day.

Results Management and Information System [“RMIS”]



The same RMIS system bought by the FEO in 2017 was used for the 2022 General Election. Some enhancements were done to the system in preparation for the 2022 General Election. The system was tested during the simulation exercise early in 2022 and results processing were tested thoroughly with excellent outcomes.

An audit was conducted on the RMIS Web Application by an external audit vendor named Xiarch who had 2 staff based in FEO office for 2 weeks to successfully run the audit, verify the changes and updates and provide a certificate and report on the final outcome. The auditors had successfully passed the RMIS Web application to be used for the 2022 General Election. Future upgrades and changes were identified

and shall be implemented when preparing for the 2026 General Election.

An overall National Results Centre security solution was also discussed and vital areas were marked with necessary solution such as CCTV in Server Room, zero RDP access to RMIS Server and so on.

Political Party Verification Application

A new method of providing copies of the PoR was planned whereby a booth was setup for each political party which had a laptop connected to it and a desktop application was developed in which party agents could login and then view and download copies of the PoR. This setup proved to be a better solution as political parties and agents had simpler and easier access to the PoR rather than having each copy printed and handed over.

Results Mobile App and Website

An upgraded version of the FEO Results App was developed in 2022 for the General Election. This version also incorporated the 2018 Official Results. The statistics section has the 2014, 2018 and 2022 stats as well.

A new website was developed and hosted on the Azure cloud platform to display the 2022 General Election results as well. This website only showed the 2022 Provisional and Official results including:

- Total Stations Completed
- Total Number of Registered Voters
- Total Number of Parties
- Total number of Candidates
- Total Valid Votes
- Total Invalid Votes

The website also consisted of a Google Maps display marked with Pre-Poll and Poll Day Venues and their status.

Site Address: <https://2022results.feo.org.fj>

Glitch in the Results Process

On the announcement of the provisional results on 14 December 2022, the FEO encountered a Glitch in the release of the results process. In its preliminary findings, it has been identified that it was a human error rather than a system error. In the process of manually transferring the data from the RMIS to the FEO Results App the wrong set of data was mistakenly transferred from the RMIS database to the FEO Results App.

The FEO is aware of the public interest in the Glitch incident and at the time of releasing this report it is currently facilitating an external audit of the RMIS and Results App to determine the actual cause of it and if there was any 3rd part interference, a thorough report into this incident will be published at a later date upon conclusion of the external audit.

ICT Infrastructure Team

The ICT Infrastructure team is responsible for the whole ICT Systems and Networks for the FEO. This team supports the day to day and project requirements run by the FEO and ensures that everything is running well. The ICT Team is focused on providing feasible solutions for the office and projects therefore it is always working on improvements and innovation.

Listed below are some new and existing projects that the ICT Team worked on and provided solutions and support for the 2022 General Election.

Disaster Recovery [“DR”] Site

After the 2018 General Election, the DR site that was setup at Vodafone had been decommissioned and was setup at the FEO Server Room. There was a serious need to have a permanent DR Setup and this was implemented at the ITC Service Data Centre at Berkeley Crescent in Suva.

A new solution was designed and existing server equipment were used to host the DR site. The FEO only had to pay for the monthly cost for the Wide Area Network [“WAN”] Link as the hosting of equipment, rack space, power and air conditioning were provided free of charge which resulted in a huge savings for this project.

The following items were used to set up the DR Site.

Equipment	Qty
Dell PowerEdge R730 Server	1
QNAP Network Attached Storage	1
Cisco 2960 Series Switch	1
20mbps WAN Link	1

Uninterruptable Power Supply [“UPS”] – upgrade

The UPS at the FEO Server Room was upgraded and a new design was put in place to provide backup power support in times of power outages and fluctuations. There were 2 existing UPS – 6Kva and 9Kva which provided unbalanced backup and did not have any monitoring in place. A new 10Kva APC UPS was installed which can handle the Server Room load for approximately 30mins.

The new UPS had the notification feature which was important in terms of monitoring power status. Additionally, the UPS unit had a temperature monitoring sensor through which the ICT Team can be alerted/notified if there are changes in temperature that is not suitable for the equipment inside the server.

VPN Solution

A new method of remote access and getting staff or users to connect to the FEO ICT Services was designed, tested and later implemented which worked successfully and provided a safe and secure network and service access. The VPN Solution used was configured on FEO existing firewalls and end users had FortiClient applications installed in order to get connected. This solution was used for the following projects:

- Elections Official Field Recruitment – team leaders used VPN to sync back data collected in the field.
- Training and Development – field trainers used VPN to access RaMEO and enter end of day training results.
- Area Office – staff used VPN to access EMS.
- EVR Document Manager – staff used VPN to access document manager web portal and upload scanned copies of forms from the VSC.
- Finance and HR – staff working from home could access Navision to process payments and Pay global to process staff salary.
- Logistics and Warehouse – staff used VPN to access EMS and IAMS in order to carry out daily tasks.

This solution was implemented free of cost as all existing infrastructure was available and only required configuration and setup.

In House Call Centers

There was a total of 3 Call Centers designed and setup during the 2022 General Election.

1500 Call Centre – after a review of the 2018 Call Centre, the solution to have it in house was developed. This call center was situated under the Command Centre at St Stephens building.

The design consisted of the following items and was deployed over the Vodafone Host PBX Solution:

Item	Qty
Yealink Desk IP Phone	12
PoE Network Switch 24port	1
4G Router	1

1502 Call Centre – during the 2018 General Election the Results Centre used mobile phones for communications and delivery of the provisional results from the venues to the Center. This setup had call congestion and drop off issues. A new solution was designed over the Hosted PBX Solution and this resulted in having 50 phones installed at the National Results Centre and the short code number [1502] provided to the Presiding Officers [“PO”]. The new short code number was requested for and approved by Telecommunications Authority of Fiji and this number was provisioned on Digicel and Vodafone Networks. With the implementation of this new PBX solution at the National Results Centre. There were no issues faced with call congestion and drop calls.

The following was used to setup the 1502 Call Centre for Provisional Results:

Item	Qty
Yealink Desk IP Phones	50
PoE Network Switch 24 port	3
Dedicated WAN Link for HPBX	5mbps

1503 Call Centre – a new Call Centre was designed and implemented to provide support for the Free Transport Service that was arranged on Election Day.

The Free Transport service on its own was a totally new service introduced by the FEO and in order to provide back end support, a Call Center was setup so that any voters having issues or wanting to find out about the Free transport schedule could call in on 1503 and the necessary support would be provided.

This Call Center setup using Vodafone’s Hosted PBX platform.

The following was used to setup the 1503 Call Centre for the FREE Transport Service;

Item	Qty
Yealink Desk IP Phones	40
PoE Network Switch 48 port	1
Dedicated WAN Link for HPBX	5mbps

1500 and 1501 SMS Platforms

The 1500 SMS platform was used to provide voters with the polling venue details when a voter sends in their voter number to 1500.

This platform was activated on both Vodafone and Digicel networks. A new set of details were included later during the Writ period which provided the voters polling venue details plus the name and mobile number of the DAC for free transport for their polling venue. The Development Services Team updated the Mobile Service providers with voter details on a daily basis to ensure that voters are getting correct details.

The 1501 Bulk SMS messaging platform was activated for the Human Resources and Recruitment Department. This platform was used to send out messages to Election Officials regarding their training, contracts and employment. This platform was very effective as the recruitment department could effectively disseminate information to the Election Officials on a timely manner.

CCTV Systems

The CCTV Surveillance system installed at the FEO HQ and Warehouse were upgraded and maintenance works carried out on the existing system to ensure that surveillance is operational all throughout the Elections period.

6 additional cameras were installed at FEO HQ. 2 additional cameras were installed at the Warehouse Sensitive materials area. A thorough maintenance was carried out on the existing CCTV system. The storage on the existing NVR was also upgraded to store 2 additional weeks of footage.

Another set of CCTV system was installed at the St Stephens Building where the Central, Eastern Division Offices were based and also included the full operations team and the training and development unit. 3 180degree outdoor camera and NVR was installed.

Wide Area Network [“WAN”] Connectivity

In order to have the remote offices connected back to the HQ and be able to access all services effectively as available at the HQ, the remote offices had to be connected via a WAN solution.

The following sites were connected through a WAN IPVPN Solution using Telecoms Fiji Fiber platform.

WAN Connected Sites – Permanent	Bandwidth
FEO HQ	32mbps
St Stephens Building	10mbps
Warehouse LBE – Narseys Bldg	2mbps
Lautoka Office – Ravouvou St	5mbps
Labasa Office – Post Fiji Bldg	5mbps
Postal Office – Nasese CTD	10mbps

During the Writ to Writ period the above sites bandwidth was increased to cater for the high volume of network usage and the ease of access to the services available on the FEO Network.

WAN Connected Sites – Permanent	Bandwidth
FEO HQ	70mbps
St Stephens Building	30mbps
Warehouse LBE – Narseys Bldg	10mbps
Lautoka Office – Ravouvou St	10mbps
Labasa Office – Post Fiji Bldg	10mbps
Postal Office – Nasese CTD	10mbps

A one-off link was also setup for the National Candidates Ball Draw at the Civic Centre main Auditorium to provide access to the EMS System.

WAN Connected Sites – Temporary	Bandwidth
FEO HQ	80mbps
Civic Centre Auditorium	20mbps

Facebook LIVE Feed

Since there was a requirement for LIVE operations footage for Ballot Box Packing, National Count Centre and National Results Centre processing to be shown on the official FEO Facebook page. This project was supported and designed for the Communications Department.

The ICT Team managed to out together, test and confirm the setup to be done and how it will be managed throughout the projects. Upon testing the solution worked with ease and was another achievement by the ICT Team since it was the first time this setup was being implemented and managed by the team.

The following items were used for the setup at the different locations:

Warehouse – Ballot Box Packing

Item	Qty
Dell Laptop	1
OBS Software	1
IP CCTV Cameras	4
Dedicated Internet	10mbps

Vodafone Arena- National Count Centre

Item	Qty
Dell Laptop	1
OBS Software	1
IP CCTV Cameras	2
Dedicated Internet	10mbps

FMF Gymnasium-National Results Centre

Item	Qty
Dell Laptop	1
OBS Software	1
IP CCTV Cameras	2
Dedicated Internet	10mbps

Central Processing Centre ["CPC"] Network

Since a new section was included in Elections process – the CPC , a network had to be setup at the Vodafone Arena and FMF Gymnasium in order for the Logistics Team, CPC Team, National Count Centre and National Results Centre team to effectively access the web-based portal and manage the transferring of Ballot Box and PoRs.

The following items were installed at these locations:

Vodafone Arena

Item	Qty
Communications Cabinet	1
Network Switch 24port	1
Indoor Access Point	1
Outdoor Wireless PTP Radio	1
Uninterruptable Power Supply	1

FMF Gymnasium

Item	Qty
Dell R730 Standalone Server	2
Outdoor Wireless PTP Radio	1
Network Switch 24 port	1
Uninterruptable Power Supply	1

Results Centre Network

The National Results Centre was a project assigned to the IT Directorate for the 2022 General Election and the whole team provided their full commitment in the preparation, setup and operations of the Results Centre.

The National Results Centre was setup with the following equipment:

Item	Qty
Dell R730 Standalone Server	2
Cisco 800 Series Router	2
Network Switch 24 port	8
Uninterruptable Power Supply	8
Laptops	130
Keyboard	130
Mouse	130
Standalone CCTV Camera	1
Network Cabling	Approx. 200 runs
Dedicated Internet Access	20mbps
Redundant Backup PTP Link	1
Projector	2
Projector Screen	2
Monochrome Printer	3
Color Printer	1

Corporate Services Directorate

The Corporate Directorate is headed by the Director Corporate Services Mr Sanjeswar Ram and consists of the following sections led by 5 heads of Department:

- Afreena Hussein-Manager Human Resources
- Romika Sewak-Financial Controller
- Ronita Chand-Acting Manager Procurement
- Faiyum Ali-Manager Election Materials/Fleet and Logistics
- Ravneel Chand- Training and Development Unit Coordinator

The core function of the Corporate Directorate is to assist and facilitate the work of other Directorates through the provision of necessary support in terms of staffing, training, procurement and policy advise. The Corporate Directorate also ensures the effective implementation of corporate governance within the legal framework, to recruit and retain skilled staff ensure sustainable management of resources and to exercise prudent financial management.

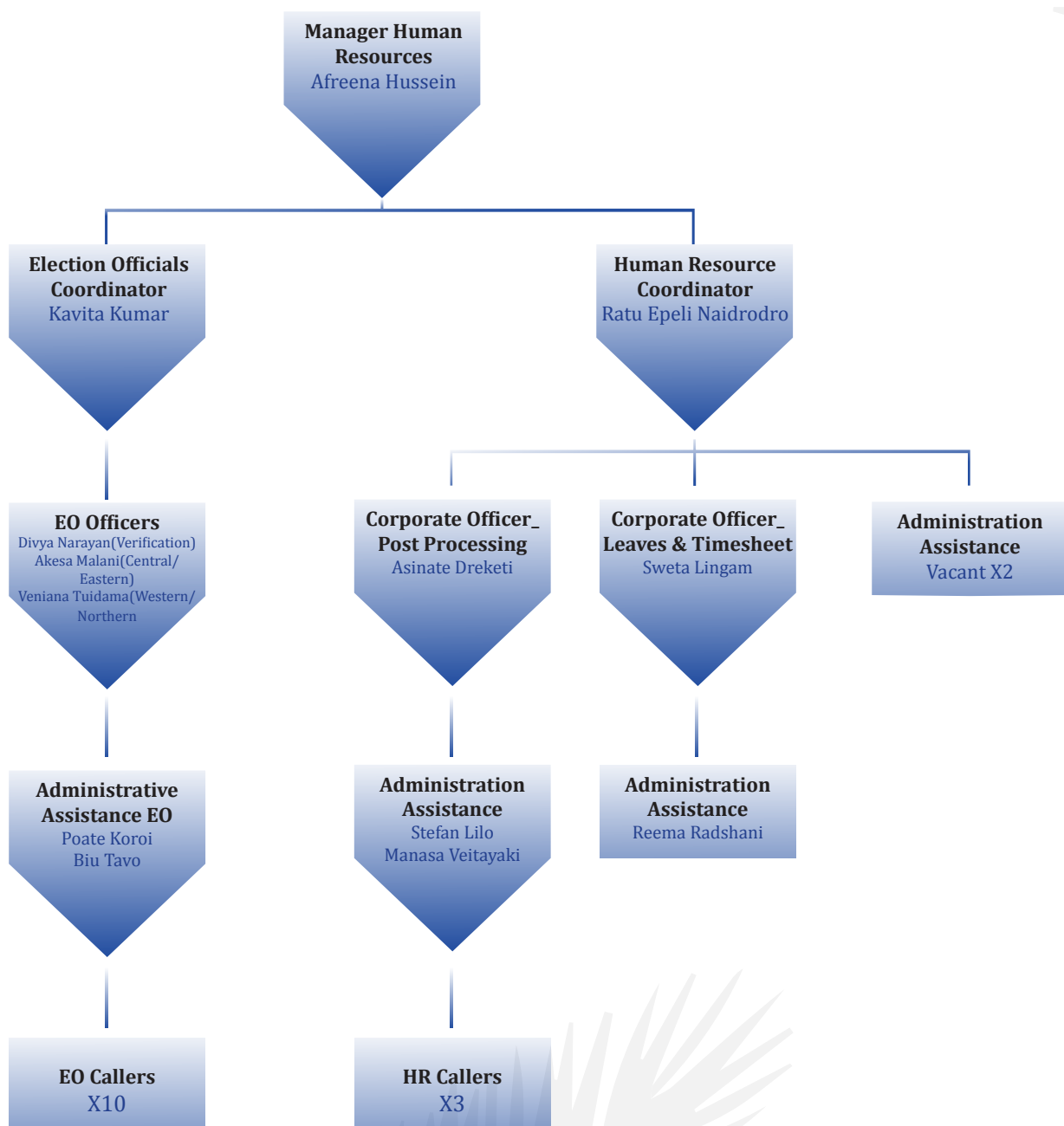


Human Resources Department

The core functions of Human Resources Department are as follows:

- Merit based recruitment and selection focussed on selecting high performing, honest employees with high standards of integrity
- Equal employment opportunity
- Position based remuneration and benefits
- Transparency and accountability in decision making
- Fairness and equity in all staffing decisions

Organisation structure for Human Resources Department:



Recruitment & Selection

The Recruitment and Selection unit manages the recruitment and selection of core staff, short term and project-based staff.

The Online Recruitment Portal jobs.feo.org.fj is used to recruit applicants for all vacant positions. This platform allows interested individuals to create their profile and apply for any vacant and suitable vacancies available at the FEO.

The Exolvo Self Service ["ESS"] system which is linked with Finance Pay Global system is used to input staff payroll details and manage staff leaves and allows for printing of individual staff payslips.

There were 66 ongoing positions, Core Staff, that ranged from 3 to 5 years and 2,437 short term positions ranging from 1 week to 24 months.

RaMEO was used to conduct computer-based recruitment drive for Election Officials. The Applicants were required to complete 20 multiple choice Aptitude Test questions in order to assist the FEO to rank the applicants by their score at the Polling Station they had applied to.

Each applicant completed the online "Application and Declaration Form" and provided the FEO with either their bank, M-PAiSA or My-Cash details, Tax Identification Number and Fiji National Provident Fund number. Applicants were provided with a unique reference number to assist with further enquiries.

The FEO designed the remuneration package that was reasonable and at the same time sufficient to attract quality applicants.

EOs Recruitment Drive			
Phase 1	Type	Recruitment Date	No. Recruited
1A	Returning EO (Online Recruitment)	15 September - 15 October 2021	3356
1B (i)	Open Recruitment for 1 day-Central Division at Kshatriya Hall	29 November 2021, 7am to 7pm	653
1 B (ii)	Western Division (a) Namaka Public School-Nadi (b) Sugar Cane Growers Hall -Lautoka	08 December 2021, 8am - 7pm	a. 486 b. 641
Phase 2	Face to Face Recruitment Drive in all Divisions	19 January to 18 February 2022	11240
Phase 3	Mini Recruitment Drive- Targeted Areas	21 April - 30 April 2022	1185
Phase 4	Teachers Drive	27 August to 4 September 2022	692
Total			18,253

The FEO carried out extensive awareness programs to ensure it was able to attract as many interested persons as possible. The advertisements for the recruitment drive were published in the daily newspapers, broadcasted on the radio, TV and on social media.

Applications were open to anyone who was a registered voter, including those already in employment elsewhere, provided their employer permitted them to undertake secondary employment. The FEO being an equal opportunity employer assessed the applications on this basis.

The FEO received a total of 18,253 applications from all Fijians.

Staffing Formula for the 2022 General Election

The following staffing formula for the 2022 General Election was approved by the SoE:

Number of Voters	Staffing Formular
≥ 300	4 EOs
≥ 400	5 EOs
≥ 500	6 EOs
≥ 650	7 EOs
Number of PS per PV	Number of Venue Que Controllers
2-3 PS	1 VQC
4-5 PS	2 VQC
6-7 PS	3 VQC
8-9 PS	4 VQC
10-11 PS	5 VQC

Election Officials salaries were equated to general annual FEO salary baselines to ensure that the pay was in line with the workload as well as the Key Performance Indicators of the positions. The FEO equated the number of hours of work necessary for the performance of the duties and also built in contingencies to facilitate any unforeseen delays or extensions. The legal deductions from the pay package was also effected.

Salaries Paid to Election Day (Poll Day) EOs:

Position	Pay (Package)
Presiding Officer [PO]	\$420.00
Assistant Presiding Officer [APO]	\$250.00
Polling Day Worker [PDW]	\$180.00
Venue Queue Controller [VQC]	\$110.00

Salaries Paid to Pre-Poll EOs:

Position	Pay per Day
Presiding Officer [PO]	\$111.00
Assistant Presiding Officer [APO]	\$91.00
Polling Day Worker [PDW]	\$72.00

Number of EOs Employed by FEO for the 2022 General Election:

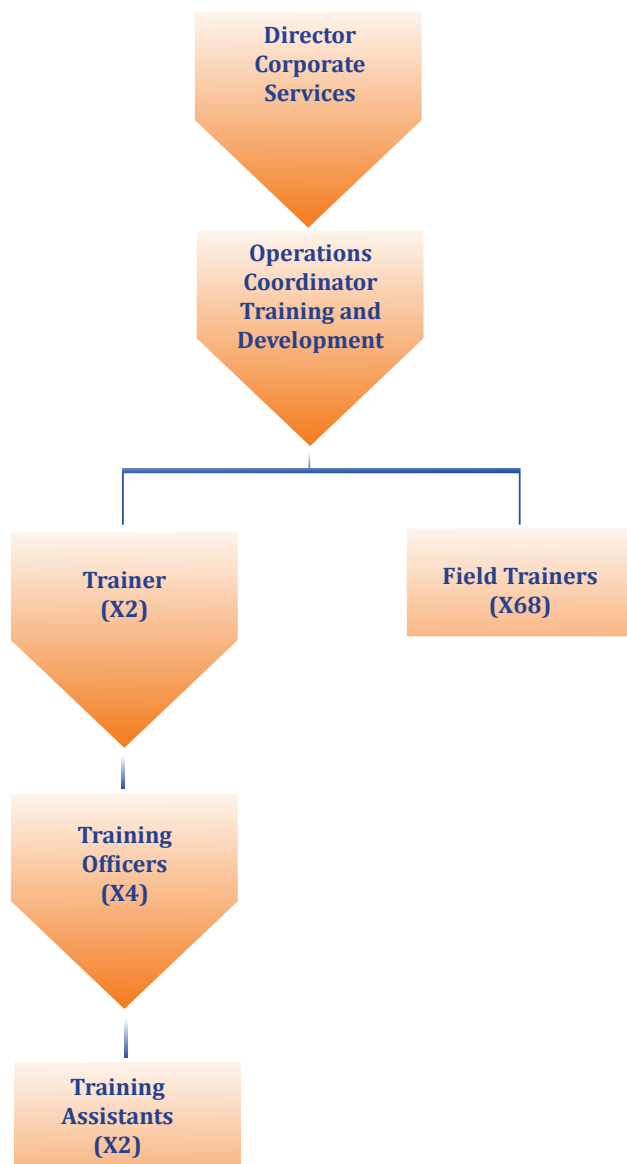
Position	Election Day		Pre-Poll	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Presiding Officer [PO]	419	1,011	42	55
Assistant Presiding Officer [APO]	312	1,110	37	60
Polling Day Worker [PDW]	843	3,164	74	116
Venue Que Controller [VQC]	103	231	NA	NA
Total	7,193		384	

The total number of staff that worked as EOs for the 2022 General Election were 7,577.

The Training and Development Unit

The Training and Development Unit ["**TDU**"] is the training and capacity building arm of the FEO. Generally, there are 2 functions of TDU, the 1st is content development which includes Operational Manuals and Training Materials and the 2nd is the operational aspect of conducting large scale training within the fixed timeframe (this includes, administration, organizing logistics and etc).

The structure of the TDU is as follows:



In addition to the above structure, each division had a Divisional Training Officer and 2 Divisional Training Assistants to provide support to TDU. The TDU also engaged 10 Callers to assist in calling Participants and other administrative matters.

The TDU was directly responsible for the following:

- Designing and implementing the Training Calendar for the 2022 General Election.
- Designing Operational Manuals, Training Plan and Training Resources for the 2022 General Election.
- Designing and implementing training programs for Election Officials engaged for the 2022 General Election.
- Conducting assessments for Election Officials.

The TDU engaged Field Trainers to deliver the training mandate of the FEO. The Field Trainers were

shortlisted and went through a 5 day substantive Training of Trainers [“ToTs”] Workshop in December 2021. Out of the shortlisted Field Trainers, 68 were selected. ToTs were conducted in the Central, Western and Northern Division. Field Trainers went through a Refresher 1 day ToTs in August 2022, a 2 day ToTs in September 2022 and a 1 day ToTs in October 2022.

The New Zealand Electoral Commission [“NZEC”] supported the TDU by providing a Technical Advisor to assist in designing and delivering training curriculum. Assistance provided by the NZEC is acknowledged and greatly appreciated.

Electoral Trainings conducted by the TDU were generally instructional and prescriptive. This was done to ensure consistency and accuracy of the training. Trainer Guides were developed by TDU and were used by Field Trainers to conduct trainings.

Training sessions involved a mixture of the following to ensure maximum efficiency of the training that was delivered:

- Group Presentations
- Hands-on use of Election Materials
- Written Tests (open book test)
- Role Playing Activities (scenario based)
- Videos
- Comprehensive Operational Manuals
- Evaluation of Training Sessions

Training and Screening Criteria

Staff who passed the Computer Based Test [“CBT”] became eligible to attend the half-day Election Officials Training. This was an assessed training which required participants to sit a test at the end of the training. An observational assessment was also done where participants were rated based on accuracy, leadership skills, facilitation skills, speed, ability to follow instructions and asking questions. The results for each participant was entered in the RaMEO. Based on the score and rating of a participant they were either selected to attend a full day PO Training or were appointed as Eos.

Training Calendar

Below is the Training Calendar for the 2022 General Election:

Training	Start Date	End Date
Training of Trainers Workshop- Central Division (Round 1)	06 December 2021	10 December 2021
Training of Trainers Workshop- Western Division (Round 1)	06 December 2021	10 December 2021
Training of Trainers Workshop- Northern Division (Round 1)	04 January 2022	08 January 2022
Election Officials Training	17 January 2022	30 July 2022
Training of Trainers Workshop- Central Division (Round 2)	07 March 2022	11 March 2022
Training of Trainers Workshop- Western Division (Round 2)	07 March 2022	11 March 2022
Training of Trainers Workshop- Central Division (Round 3)	05 April 2022	09 April 2022
Training of Trainers Workshop- Western Division (Round 3)	05 April 2022	09 April 2022
Presiding Officers Training	19 April 2022	15 October 2022
Training for Fiji Police Force on Election Day Processes (PO Training)	19 April 2022	19 April 2022
Area Officers Training	28 June 2022	30 June 2022
Area Officers Pre-Writ Refresher Training	21 July 2022	23 July 2022

Hub Leaders Workshop	23 July 2022	23 July 2022
Training of Trainers 2 for Western Division	18 August 2022	18 August 2022
Training of Trainers 2 for Northern Division	20 August 2022	20 August 2022
Training of Trainers 2 for Central/Eastern Division Session 1	22 August 2022	22 August 2022
Training of Trainers for Hub Leaders Pre-Writ Training	13 September 2022	13 September 2022
Hub Leaders Pre-Writ Training Central/Eastern Division Session 1	14 September 2022	15 September 2022
Hub Leaders Pre-Writ Training Western Division Session 1	14 September 2022	15 September 2022
Hub Leaders Pre-Writ Training Northern Division	15 September 2022	16 September 2022
Hub Leaders Pre-Writ Training Central/Eastern Division Session 2	16 September 2022	17 September 2022
Hub Leaders Pre-Writ Training Western Division Session 2	16 September 2022	17 September 2022
Training of Trainers 3 Central/Eastern Division	20 September 2022	21 September 2022
Training of Trainers 3 Western Division	23 September 2022	24 September 2022
Training of Trainers 3 Northern Division	23 September 2022	24 September 2022
Presiding Officers Online Training on eVuli	14 October 2022	30 November 2022
Training of Trainers 4 Central/Eastern Division Session 1	18 October 2022	18 October 2022
Training of Trainers 4 Central/Eastern Division Session 2	19 October 2022	19 October 2022
Training of Trainers 4 Western Division	20 October 2022	20 October 2022
Training of Trainers 4 Northern Division	22 October 2022	22 October 2022
Training for Fiji Police Force on Election Day Processes (PO Training)	05 November 2022	05 November 2022
Training of Trainers 4	05 November 2022	05 November 2022
PO Training for Central/Eastern Division Staff	06 November 2022	06 November 2022
Presiding Officers Refresher Training	10 November 2022	10 December 2022
Training of Trainers: Area Officers Refresher Training	14 November 2022	14 November 2022
Area Officers Refresher Training Central/Eastern Division	16 November 2022	17 November 2022
Area Officers Refresher Training Western/Northern Division	16 November 2022	17 November 2022
Training of Trainers for Pre-Poll Training	22 November 2022	22 November 2022
Pre-Poll Training Central 1	24 November 2022	24 November 2022
Pre-Poll Training Western 1	24 November 2022	24 November 2022
Pre-Poll Training Central 2	25 November 2022	25 November 2022
Pre-Poll Training Western 2	25 November 2022	25 November 2022
Pre-Poll Training Eastern 1	26 November 2022	26 November 2022
Pre-Poll Training Eastern 2	27 November 2022	27 November 2022
Pre-Poll Training Northern 1	27 November 2022	27 November 2022
Pre-Poll Training Eastern 3	28 November 2022	28 November 2022
Pre-Poll Training Northern 2	28 November 2022	28 November 2022
Pre-Poll Training Eastern 4	29 November 2022	29 November 2022
Pre-Poll Training Northern 3	29 November 2022	29 November 2022
Training of Trainers for Hub Leaders Training	05 December 2022	05 December 2022
Hub Leaders Refresher Training Central/Eastern 1	07 December 2022	07 December 2022
Hub Leaders Refresher Training Western 1	07 December 2022	07 December 2022
Hub Leaders Refresher Training Northern	07 December 2022	07 December 2022
Hub Leaders Refresher Training Central/Eastern 2	08 December 2022	08 December 2022
Hub Leaders Refresher Training Western 2	08 December 2022	08 December 2022

Polling Day Workers [“PDW”]

Election Officials Training commenced on 17 January 2022 and was completed on 30 July 2022. A total of 16270 Applicants were invited to attend this training out of which 12749 Applicants attended the training. In total, 714 training sessions were conducted Fiji wide.

The training was designed in light of the COVID-19 restrictions and precautionary measures. Based on the test results and observational assessment rating, participants were selected for POs Training.

During the Writ period, the FEO ensured that all appointed PDWs were provided with a copy of their Task Sheets. Task Sheets were consolidated in a Booklet and distributed to PDWs via email. Physical copies of this Booklet were also made available at the Area Offices, VSCs and Divisional Offices of FEO so that PDWs can collect a copy.

Presiding Officers’

POs and APOs were trained from 19 April 2022 to 15 October 2022. A total of 9,101 applicants were invited to attend this training out of which 6,967 applicants attended the training. In total 370 training sessions were conducted Fiji wide.

An Applicant qualified to attend POs training if:

- He/she attained the required marks in the written test and the required observational rating during the EO Training; or
- If the Applicant was a Presiding Officer or an Assistant Presiding Officer during the 2018 General Election.

Given that initially, there were insufficient number of POs and APOs, the Human Resources Department conducted an additional round of recruitment for school teachers. These applicants directly qualified to attend POs Training. Training for these applicants was conducted from 24 September to 15 October 2022.

The training for POs was a full day session and was more comprehensive than the Election Officials Training to ensure that those who are appointed had sufficient knowledge in terms of electoral processes as well as management and leadership skills.

A 1 day Refresher Training for the POs and APOs was conducted from 10 November to 10 December 2022. This was to allow POs and APOs to refine their knowledge and skills right before the 2022 General Election. This training was for confirmed and contracted POs and APOs and also those who were in the reserve pool. A total of 3789 POs and APOs were invited to attend the training out of which 3,346 attended the training. In total 181 training sessions were conducted Fiji wide.

As opposed to EO Training and PO Training, the turnout for PO Refresher Training was impressive. The TDU noted that given that the PO Refresher Training was done during the Writ period where the date of the election was known, it gained more interest from applicants. Also, at this point in time, most of the POs and APOs were contracted and appointed. However, there were still withdrawals at this stage. Emphasis of this training were on the voting steps, counting process and the use of My Polling Assistant App. A copy of the Polling Day POs Manual was also distributed to all participants to allow them sufficient time to study the processes.

The TDU noted that the level of electoral interest demonstrated by certain POs was remarkable. This was evident through their responses to questions, group activities and scenario-based situations during the training.

To ensure that training was properly conducted, the TDU carried out random Quality Assurance Checks. Discussions with participants were also held to ascertain the impact and efficiency of the training.

The TDU also made other initiatives to ensure that POs and APOs are provided with resources and information so that they can do their work diligently and in accordance with the processes. The FEO utilized its virtual learning platform eVuli to organize an online training for POs and APOs. Although this was not a mandatory training, it was highly recommended. Incentives to win Laptop, Smart Phones and Cash Prize was also provided. This was a self-paced training and participants were afforded the flexibility to attend to this course at anytime from anywhere.

A total of 2,640 POs and APOs were enrolled in this course out of which 485 completed the final quiz. This is a relatively less number however, this was a good start towards introducing more online courses in future. It also means that there are opportunities in online training which can be explored.

The TDU also developed videos on voting steps and counting process which was used during PO Trainings (including Refresher Training). The videos were also broadcasted on FEOs TV Channel on Walesi which POs and APOs were recommended to watch before 2022 General Election.

Pre-Poll Training

Pre-Poll Training was conducted for Pre-Poll POs and APOs from 24 to 29 November 2022. A total of 11 sessions were conducted in which 235 POs and APOs were trained. All trainees were trained to identify the differences between Election Day and Pre-Poll processes and to implement the different procedures accordingly. For example, ensuring that the voters' place their Ballot Paper in a Secret Envelope before putting it into the Ballot Paper.

Emphasis was also placed on following and completing the Pre-Poll Journal which is one of the core documents that is used in Pre-Poll voting. The Journal contained vital information and instructions such as deployment instructions, activity logs, Attendance Sheets and Pre-Poll Materials Exchange Site Information. Prior to attending this training all POs and APOs had attended the EO and PO Training. A copy of the Pre-Poll POs Manual was given to all participants during the training.

Area Officers' Training

Area Officers' play an important role in the administration of an election. It was pivotal to organize sufficient training for Area Officers' to enable them to do their work properly. The first training was a substantive 3 day workshop organized at the Southern Cross Hotel in Suva from 28 to 30 June 2022.

This training included Area Officers from all divisions and the Operations Officers. The training was facilitated by TDU and the Divisional Managers. Presentations were also made by the Development Services Team on the use of Electoral Management System, Manager Postal on Postal Voting and Political Parties Engagement Officer on Polling Agents Accreditation Process. The Logistics Team also did a presentation, a demonstration of logistics process and organized for an excursion to the Warehouse.

A Pre-Writ Refresher Training was organized for Area Officers at Studio 6 Conference Room in Suva from 21 to 22 July 2022. This training covered updated Logistics Processes and the Election Management System. This training was also combined for Area Officers from all Divisions. On 23 July 2022, the Area Officers' attended the Hub Leaders Workshop. This was to go through the Hub Leader processes. This Workshop also allowed an opportunity for Area Officers' to meet and create a rapport with their Hub Leaders. This training and workshop were also facilitated by TDU and Divisional Managers.

A final 2 day Area Officers' Refresher Training was conducted during the Writ period from 16 to 17 November 2022. This training also included the Area Administrative Assistants. 2 sessions were organized, one in Suva which catered for Central and Eastern Area Officers and the other in Nadi which

catered for Western and Northern Area Officers. This was a substantive training which covered Pre-Poll Processes, Postal Processes and Election Day Processes. Emphasis was placed in the use of Election Management System and My Polling Assistant App.

Hub Leaders Training

Hub Leaders played a critical role in the administration of Election on Election Day. Hub Leaders were responsible for amongst other things, to deliver Election Materials to POs, provide support and assistance to POs, collect Election Materials from POs after Counting, deliver the Ballot Box and Tamper Evident Envelope to the Area Officer, implement instructions given by Area Officers, manage POs and to ensure that all Polling Venues within their respective Hub is operating smoothly.

Hub Leaders were trained in 3 different phases:

1. Introductory Workshop- 1 Day
2. Hub Leaders Pre-Writ Training – 2 Days
3. Hub Leaders Refresher Training- 1 Day

The Introductory Workshop for Hub Leaders was conducted on 23 July 2022. This was also attended by the Area Officers. This Workshop introduced Hub Leaders to basic principles of Elections, what is required to be a Hub Leader, Electoral Materials, Election Day and Post-Election Day processes. The Workshop also included a Question and Answer Session with the SoE. This opportunity was well utilized by the Hub Leaders to seek clarification on various processes. This Workshop was facilitated by TDU and Divisional Managers.

The Hub Leaders Pre-Writ Training was conducted from 14 to 17 September 2022. This training was a substantive training on the roles and responsibilities of a Hub Leader. Before the Training, a Training of Trainers was conducted on 13 September 2022 by the Operations Coordinator- Training and Development and NZEC Technical Advisor to equip the Divisional Managers and other trainers with the necessary skills to effectively deliver Hub Leaders Pre-Writ Training.

The final Hub Leaders Refresher Training was conducted from 07 to 08 December 2022. A total 5 sessions were conducted and 114 Hub Leaders were trained. This training covered all the updated processes. The Hub Leaders were trained amongst other things on how to use the My Polling Assistant App to scan Election Packages and to monitor Polling Stations. A copy of the Hub Leaders Manual was distributed to the Participants.

Other Trainings

The TDU also assisted in various other trainings. The ToT for the National Count Centre Training was designed and facilitated by TDU and the NZEC Technical Advisor. The Voter Awareness Assistants Training was developed by TDU. The Training of Trainers for Voter Awareness Assistants Training was conducted by TDU.

The TDU conducted induction training, Project Management Training and other professional development training for staff.

Procurement Department

The aim of the Procurement Department was to acquire quality resources, items and services at the best value from reliable vendors having esteem for quality, efficiency and back up services. Providers were selected either through open tender or sourcing of 3 or more quotes. Suppliers that best met the FEO's requirements were attained and engaged.

This Department ensured that all procuring and engagements were conducted in a transparent, appropriate and responsible manner, while holding the FEO values. The FEO Procurement Policy has also allowed the Procurement Department to procure specific sensitive election items directly from vendors, which was actioned when necessary with appropriate documentations.

The Procurement Department had a number of activities to accommodate for all departments including hire of venues, vehicle engagement, catering, purchasing of items and hiring of services such as containers for storage for the 2022 General Elections that were requested by other Departments.

In order to achieve its objectives, the Procurement Department publicized tenders for goods, services and works total value of which was in excess of FJD \$200,000.00.

Goods, services and works of lesser value were purchased subsequently by obtaining a minimum of 3 competitive quotations from any one vendor. Arrangements were clearly highlighted and supported with reasonings.

The following tenders were called and awarded for materials and equipment:

2021/2022 TENDERS			
Tender Number	Item Required	Successful Bidder	Amount
Tender 01/2021	Laptops	DATEC FIJI LIMITED	\$404,292.00
Tender 02/2021	Polling Kits	Kriz Signs Fiji Limited	\$840,561.47
Tender 03/2021	Postal Voting Courier- International	DHL	\$221,587.50
	Postal Voting Courier- Local	EMS	
Tender 04/2021	Printing of Voter Instructions Booklet	Star Printery	\$308,200.00
		Quality Print Limited	\$146,200.00
Tender 05/2021	Supply of Polling Station Sheds	Formscaff Fiji Limited	\$526,731.60
Tender 06/2021	Printing of Ballot Paper	Star Printery	\$208,450.00
Tender 07/2021	Storage and Logistics of Election Materials		
Tender 01/2022	System Compliance Audit of Results Manage- ment Information System	Xiarch Solutions Pvt Ltd	Approx \$163762.5 FJD

The FEO successfully managed to advertise and award tenders for all items and services required for the 2022 General Election. Items procured via the tender process were also successfully delivered by the selected bidders within the timeframe stipulated.

Further to the Tenders, the Procurement Department was also assisted by number of stakeholders as below:

- Voting Screens – NZEC
- Indelible Ink –Government of India
- Mahindra Vehicles - Government of India

While preparing for the 2022 General Election during the Voter Registrations Drives, the Procurement Department was involved in the Overseas Voter Registrations Drive, whereby the Department organized for all necessary flights and accommodations for the traveling staff.

The Procurement Department was also involved in all publications, securing of commercial spaces, hire of vehicles and charter of boats, helicopters and aeroplanes for the polling teams, printing of Election Day materials and purchase of Pre-Poll equipment including tents, table, chairs and packing materials. Election Day materials, including security services, back up services such as generators and aircon units were also hired on a needs basis.

The Department also assisted in all of TDU's training requirements by hiring training venues, organizing flights, accommodation and transportation for trainers, and catering for approved trainings, along with their printing requirements which included, Manuals, Awareness Charts, Brochures and booklets.

The Department had 4 dedicated Procurement Officers assigned to the 4 Divisional Offices, who were responsible for their assigned divisional requests. These requests were based on the divisional requirements and were actioned with the aid of the Corporate Team from the Divisional Offices.

A number of vehicles with drivers were also hired during the Election Day from the pool of bidders that was created with the Expression of Interests received. A total of 393 vehicles were hired and utilized during the 2022 General Election, which catered for the Voter Instruction Booklets, Pre-poll voting and Election Day transportation. Vehicles for Area Offices and project vehicles were similarly organized through the 3 or more quotations as per procurement standards.

The Procurement Department was also responsible for the hire of the Vodafone Arena for the National Count Centre, Central Processing Centre along with its carpark for shipping container logistics and the National Gymnasium for Results Centre during the Election Day and the counting period. The engagement included catering services provided to all staff engaged for the days. Meals included breakfast, lunch and dinner as these centers operated 24/7 until the count and results were completed. Hiring also included resourcing of tables, chair and tents.

Upon the announcement of 2022 General Election Results, a week was dedicated for the clearing of the venues whereby all hired items were dispatched to the suppliers, with appropriate handover.

A number of challenges were faced while completing the purchase and service engagements, such as strict deadlines, ad-hoc requests, extended estimated time of arrivals of items, shipment delays, unavailability of vendors locally, unavailability of materials locally, late procurement requests, and short supply of materials. Sourcing vendors for hardware, software upgrades and purchase for the ICT Directorate were amongst other challenges encountered.

The Procurement Department was correspondingly working with the Finance Departments and divisional officers to complete payments on time as well as doing reconciliations, creation of Local Purchase Orders ["LPO"] and making necessary amendments when specifications were not met by the requesters. Procurement Department ensured that all vendors were engaged with an issue of LPO before the delivery of goods and services. In instances where the suppliers did not accept LPO from FEO, services were procured through accountable advance and in cases where the cost was below \$100 dollars, petty cash was accessed.

It can be concluded that the 2022 General Election purchasing and service engagements was conducted effectively and efficiently, whilst meeting all deadlines and conducted in accordance with company processes and procedures.

Warehouse and Logistics

Packing of Non-Sensitive Material

The packing team consisted of 20 project staff including a Core team from Warehouse engaged in the packing of non-sensitive materials. The staff were split into 6 teams consisting of 3 members each and the remaining staff were engaged in the packing of polling kits into cartons.

The remaining Warehouse Team were responsible for replenishing all items on the table that were for packing in the containers. The whole packing process was completed in two weeks and in total 2,800 polling kits were packed.

Below is the packing order by area office.

Non-Sensitive Material Packing Breakdown

Division	Total Polling Kits Packed	Voting Screen Send
Central	806	806
Western	700	700
Northern	400	400
Eastern	300	300
Training Team	100	Nil
SOE Contingency	400	400
Warehouse	94	94

Breakdown of Number of Shipping Containers Used

Division	ED Non- Sensitive	Pre-Poll Sensitive	ED- Sensitive	Others [Storage]
Western	10	3	5	NIL
Northern	7	2	5	NIL
Central	11	3	6	2
Eastern	3	2	4	2
SoE BACKUP	-	-	-	2

Prepoll Packing Of Sensitive Materials

Packing for Prepoll started on 27 November 2022 in line with the Writ to Writ timeline and commenced at 7am with the presence of media personnel and the FEO senior executives.

In the process of packing, it was decided that most work would be done electronically in terms of scanning and printing of barcodes for the ballot book serial numbers.

The introduction of barcodes and scanning of ballot books lessened the task of writing and filling in of POs record book. EMS stickers were pasted from the first table before the pasting of CPC stickers was also changed as introduced by the TA's including Senior Executives.

The ballot paper transport box was no longer needed to pack the ballot paper books which was approved by SoE as it took up much space, often delaying the packing process as stickers were required to be pasted including the sealing of the box.

The 1st day of packing saw the completion of the Northern Division except for Savusavu Area Office. A total of 103 ballot boxes were packed on the 1st day. On the 2nd day, Savusavu area was completed and packing moved on to the western division which had a total of 173 ballot boxes.

Upon the completion of the Western division on the 2nd day, the team packed for Lomaiviti and Kadavu which had 51 and 62 ballot boxes respectively. The Eastern Division was next on the list and only 77 ballot boxes were packed since the first 2 areas, Lomaiviti and Kadavu were packed on the 2nd day.

The streams managed to pack all 77 ballot boxes on the 3rd day as well as the 115 ballot boxes for Central Division before 5pm on the same day.

Pre-Poll Packing Breakdown by Division

Division	Total Ballot Box Packed
Central	115
Western	173
Northern	140
Eastern	190

Packing Of Sensitive Materials For Election Day

The packing for Election Day began on 03 December 2022 and lasted a for a total of 5 days. Packing was initially planned for 6 days, however, due to the team's efficiency this was completed ahead on time.

Issues that were identified during Pre-poll packing were improved on Election Day packing as teams understood clearly the requirements for packing. A few adjustments were noted for the Election Day packing as secret envelope were replaced by PoR and count sorting cards were added to the Election Day checklist.

A total of 1,435 ballot boxes were packed for Election Day and the teams were required to pack the items as per the specified timeline.

Below is the record for all divisions packed including the number of ballot boxes packed:

Election Day Packing Breakdown by Division

Division	Total Ballot Box Packed
Central	468
Western	442
Northern	250
Eastern	275

Logistics at Vodafone Arena

At the Vodafone Arena the first containers that arrived were the pre-poll containers from the Northern division. All the containers were locked and sealed by the Area officers.

Next containers arrived at the Vodafone Arena were the containers from the Western Division. The Eastern and Central Division pre-poll containers were transported directly to the Vodafone Arena from St. Stephens Building.

All Election Day containers from all divisions were kept outside the National Count Centre.

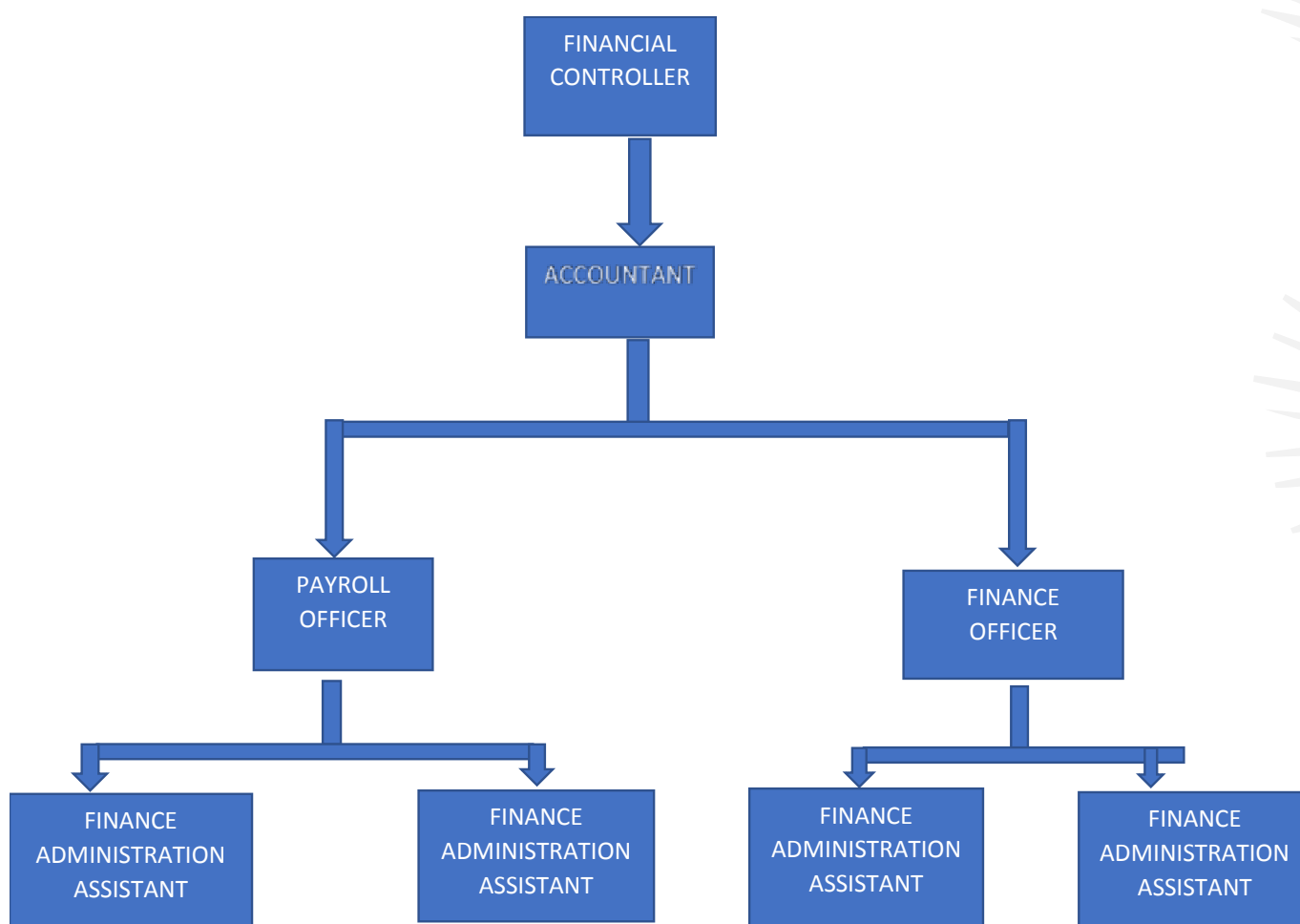


Finance Department

The role of the Finance Department includes planning, organizing, auditing, accounting for and controlling the FEO's finances. The Finance Department also produces the FEO's financial statements for its management and various stakeholders including the Public Accounts Committee. The core function of the Department is accounts payable, accounts receivable, payroll, reconciliation, reporting and preparing financial statements, financial control and audit. The Finance Manual is the policy document that governs the financial processes undertaken by the Finance Department.

The Finance Department is managed by the Financial Controller with the assistance of the Finance Officer and Payroll Officer. In Election mode, the Finance Department had a total of 8 staff as compared to 2018 where there were 12 staff. Further, in Election Mode, the Department had additional positions of Accountant and Payroll Officer reporting directly to the Financial Controller.

Below is an illustration outlining the financial structure of the FEO in Election Mode:



Budget/Expenditure

The government grant approved for the FEO in its financial year 01 August 2022 to 31 July 2023 was \$33,211,124.53 VIP compared to 2018 which was \$20,412,496 allocated for the year after which additional funding of \$2,439,805 was released to cater for election expenditure. From the government grant funding of \$33,211,124.53 allocated for the year, \$15,077,539.14 was allocated to cater for the expenditure for the Election Day and Writ period.

The FEO also received donations from various donor agencies which included the High Commission of India, New Zealand Electoral Commission, United Nations Development Programme, South Pacific

Community and funding from United Kingdom. These donations were received in the form of cash, election material and services relating to the election.

The table below summaries the donor contributions to the FEO that was received from April 2022 to assist in Election preparation and delivery:

No	Date	Donor	Description	Amount	Total Amount (FJD)
1	12/04/2022	UNDP	Leadership and Media Training		\$168,000.00
2	30/06/2022	High Commission of India	Mah Twin Cab 4WD Manual S6	\$59,000.00	
3	30/06/2022	High Commission of India	Mah Twin Cab 4WD Manual S6	\$59,000.00	
4	30/06/2022	High Commission of India	Mah Twin Cab 4WD Manual S6	\$65,000.00	
5	30/06/2022	High Commission of India	Mah Twin Cab 4WD Manual S6	\$65,000.00	\$248,000.00
6	31/07/2022	UNDP	Stakeholder Engagement on electoral education		\$75,092.44
7	16/08/2022	UNDP	Stakeholder Engagement on electoral education		\$40,184.74
8	04/10/2022	High Commission of India	Indelible Ink		\$322,531.88
9	02/12/2022	NZEC	Deputy Supervisor of Election salary funding		\$125,262.28
10	29/12/2022	NZEC	Result Management Information System		\$168,199.15
11	09/01/2022	UK High Commission	Election Visitor Project		\$12,809.16
	Total				\$1,160,079.65

Donor funds received from 12 April 2022 till 30 June 2022 for the financial year 2022 amounted to \$491,092.44. The donor funds received in the election year amounted to \$668,987.21 whereas in 2018 only the Indian High Commission donated \$291,830 to procure 5 vehicles.

The total funds available for the FEO for the year 01 August 2022 till July 2023 is \$33,880,111.74

The expenditure report from 01 August 2022 to 06 March 2023 included the salary of EOs and staff, charter of vessels and plane, meals, subsistence allowance, hire of sheds, transport, printing of materials, advertisements for Pre-Poll and Election Day, catering for the National Count Centre and National Result Centres and all other expenses. From the Election Budget of \$15,077,539, \$8,785,801 was utilized for election expenses.

Expenditure Report as at 06 March 2023

	Total Budget (\$)	Expenditure (\$)	% utilised
Assets Long term	38,000	37,030	97%
Information Technology Expenses	700,837	273,570	39%
Consultants Fees	304,072	196,434	65%
Management Expense	3,800	2,214	58%
Insurance	47,043	42,277	90%
Legal Fees	208,796	22,726	11%
Loss-Disposal Fixed Asset	4,348	-	0%
Marketing Costs	3,197,583	1,667,777	52%
Newspaper & Subscription	27,050	1,021	4%
Personnel Emoluments Expense	12,837,803	7,381,184	57%

Staff Training - Training	107,103	38,445	36%
Postage and Courier Expense	683,023	607,243	89%
Office Administration Expense	7,540,825	4,709,094	62%
Telecommunication Exp	676,377	409,691	61%
Travel and Accommodation Expense	5,558,958	3,870,407	70%
Financial Expense	5,000	2,075	42%
EC and Office Meeting Expense	12,455		0%
Operating Expense	31,953,073	19,261,188	60%
VAT	1,927,039	1,033,939	54%
Total	33,880,112	20,295,128	60%

Payroll

The FEO payroll system was acquired from DXC Eclipse (Fiji) Ltd. Separate licensing was acquired from the vendor to facilitate payment of EO salary and training allowances as the current licensing under FEO only catered for salary expenditure for its core staff and short-term staff. The system was designed to cater for the payments for the EO training allowance, EO salary, Pre-Poll salary and National Count Centre Team salary in batches.

The below table highlights the payment of the staff:

Description	No.Paid	Turn Around Time
Election Officials training allowance (# of times)	19,665	2days
Election Officials	7210	1-2 days
Count	601	2days
RMIS	263	3 days
HUB leaders/HUB assistants	187	2days
Prepoll	383	2days

The data was generated from the EORS in a Comma Separated Values (CSV) file and loaded on the Pay Global. The data file once uploaded was able to generate the required payroll edit reports for the processing of payments. The Election Official's payroll batch which consisted of more than 3,000 Election Officials pay took 1 day to process and submit to the bank. The FEO managed to pay 7,210 EOs within 5 days after Election Day.

Corporate Online Banking and Divisional Bank Account

The Corporate Online Banking ["COL"] was implemented and FEO started using this on 10 May 2018. The Operations Department was decentralized and each Divisional Office was set up. The Divisional Office COL was setup to control the allocated funds which was dispersed to the Divisional account. After consultation with Westpac, 4 Divisional Accounts were created (Central, Western, Eastern, and Northern.). This platform enabled the divisions to make payments for hire of venues, allowances to staff, catering vendors, hire of vehicles and other miscellaneous payments.

The payment submissions were received for accountable advance from the divisions and funds were directly transferred to the Divisional Account. The COL provided access to monitor the funds from the source of funds to the receiver of funds. Divisional Offices were able to monitor and control the funding they received from the FEO Head Office and even make payment directly to the vendors account. Furthermore, COL would generate reports as evidence to show the payments being made and the transaction that are carried out. Also, the COL system is faster in processing payments than through

electronic funds transfer as files are uploaded by the user and verified at the user end.

Mobile Money

The FEO carried out a voter survey in late 2020, and short-term staff were engaged to conduct this survey. The short-term engagement stated that the staff would be paid according to the number of surveys that they would do. The requirements by the banks increased as one of the requirements were that the applicant would need to provide confirmation on the source of funds. In order to facilitate the payment for such staff the FEO looked into implementing mobile money due to the minimum requirements to use this platform from Vodafone Fiji Ltd and Digicel Fiji Ltd. This system allowed payments to be sent through mobile numbers. The only requirement was to have the number registered under the recipient's name. The processing time was fast and took only 10 secs for a staff to receive the funds after payments were processed on the platform. This platform was easy to use when processing payments for Election Officials and was a convenient method making it easier for those that did not have bank accounts to receive their pay. This is evident in the fact that around 75% of the EOs preferred payments to be made through the Mpaia and My Cash platform.



OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE

The Operations Directorate structure was reorganized after the 2018 General Election to support the operational needs of the FEO's 4 year strategic plan and build-up of activities for the 2022 General Election.

It was evident that planning for the 2022 General Election had to be more robust based on the learnings and best practices from 2018. The FEO values the effective planning process while ensuring that all electoral operations took place in a timely manner and conducted successfully in compliance with the legal framework in place.

The Operations Directorate manages the following electoral functions

- Voter Registration
- Polling Venues Management
- Divisional Office Operations
- Postal Voting
- Pre-poll Voting
- Election Day Polling
- Production of the Voter Instruction Booklets
- Command Centre
- Election Security

The objective of the Operations Directorate was to ensure that all eligible voters were given the opportunity to register and that sufficient operational activities were carried out to enable a voter to cast their vote during the 2022 General Election.

Voter Registration

Voter Registration services had ceased on 01 October 2018 when the Writ for the 2018 General Election was issued and reopened on 18 March 2019. This was to allow the FEO to review its voter registration system and procedures post the 2018 General Election. The resumption of voter registration services ensured that voters had ample time to register, correct or amend their voter details before the 2022 General Election.

In 2019, the FEO began its voter registration exercise by opening 3 major VSCs in March. These VSCs were opened in Suva, Lautoka and Labasa. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 hindered operations of these VSCs, however, once the restrictions related to the pandemic were lifted in October 2021, the FEO further opened additional VSCs to meet the demands of the general public and ensure that Fijian citizens had the opportunity to access voter services and update their details before the 2022 General Election.

Below are the VSCs that were opened in order to provide voter services to the General public:

Division	Area	Location	Date Opened
Central	Suva	FEO Voter Services Centre (Old Fiji Visitors Building)	18/03/2019
	Navua	Provincial Administrator Serua Office, Ro Matanitobua Complex	06/09/2021
	Korovou	District Officer's Office - Waimaro House	25/10/2021
	Nausori	Tailevu House	10/11/2021
	Wainibuka	DO's Office, Nayavu	01/12/2021
	Valelevu	LTA Complex (Main Foyer)	10/01/2022
	Vunidawa	Ministry of Africulture, PA Naitasiri	03/05/2022
Western	Keyasi	Do's Office, Navatumaili Government Station, Keyasi	11/11/2021
	Sigatoka	Provincial Administrator Nadroga/ Navosa Office, Lawaqa Park	04/10/2021
	Nadi	Shop 3 Westpoint Arcade	08/10/2021
	Lautoka	36 Vitogo Parade, Lautoka	18/03/2019
	Ba	Provincial Administrator Ba Office, Koronubu House, Ground Floor - Foyer	08/10/2021
	Rakiraki	Provincial Administrator Ra Office, Cakova Crescent	08/10/2021
	Tavua	DO's office, Government Building, Nasini Street, Tavua	21/02/2022
Northern	Labasa	FEO Voter Services Centre, Legal Aid Building, Jaduram street	18/03/2019
	Taveuni	Cakaudrove Provincial Office, Somosomo, Taveuni	29/12/2021
	Seaqaqa	DO's Conference Room, Raimuri Road, Natua, Seaqaqa	02/05/2022
	Nabouwalu	PA's Office Naulumatua House, Vuya, Bua	02/05/2022
	Savusavu	Cakaudrove Provincial Council, Yaroi Savusavu	10/01/2022
Eastern	Levuka	PA's Office, Totogo Lane, Levuka	01/12/2021
	Kadavu	PA's Office, Vunisea Govt Station, Kadavu	27/05/2022

In addition to the voter registration services at the VSCs, the FEO conducted various voter registration drives in- country as well as Overseas on the following dates:

- Adhoc Voter Registration Drive: 04 October to 31 December, 2021
- Nationwide Voter Registration Drive-Phase 1: 26 February to 14 April 2022
- School Registration Drive: 19 April to 29 April 2022
- Nationwide Voter Registration Drive-Phase 2: 01 August to 03 September 2022
- Overseas Voter Registration Drive:
 - Phase 1: 15 May to 26 May 2022
 - Phase 2: 08 August to 21 August 2022
 - Phase 3: 02 September to 11 September 2022
- Central Division's Urban Registration Drive: 23 September to 25 September 2022
- Western Division's Urban Registration Drive: 30 September to 02 October 2022

- Snap Voter Registration Drive 1: 21 October to 22 October 2022
- Snap Voter Registration Drive 2: 29 October to 31 October 2022

Breakdown of Voter Registration Tallies between 2019 to 2022:

Registrations	Dates	New Reg	Corrections/ Updates	Total
Ad Hoc Registration	04/10/2021 - 31/12/2021	16,488	112,432	128,920
Business House Registration I	20/10/2021 - 17/12/2021	1,332	18,683	20,015
Nationwide Registration as of 4/4/2022	26/02/2022 - 14/04/2022	19,879	181,020	200,899
Business House Registration II	26/03/2022 - 04/05/2022	630	7,065	7,695
School Registration	19/04/2022 - 29/04/2022	1,920	2,118	4,038
Nationwide Registration Drive Phase II	01/08/22 - 03/09/2022	8,334	49,984	58,318
Central Ad Hoc	23/09/22 - 25/09/22	266	2,262	2,528
Western Ad Hoc	30/09-2/10	370	3,564	3,934
Ad Hoc	22/10/22 - 23/10/22	36	469	505
Ad Hoc WD	29/10/22 - 31/10/22	1,219	10,761	11,980
KYE Phase II	1/08/22 - 02/09/22	8,049	47,676	55,725
OVRD Phase I	15/05/22 - 26/05/22	300	1,089	1,389
OVRD Phase II	08/07/22 - 21/07/22	207	1,097	1,304
OVRD Phase III	02/09/22 - 11/09/22	95	164	259
Voter Registration 2019	March - December 2019	8,417	30,005	38,422
Voter Registration 2020	February - December 2020	9,465	39,169	48,634
Voter Registration 2021	January - December 2021	20,454	122,886	143,340
Voter Registration 2022	January - 31 October 2022	46,590	484,369	530,959
Replacement of Voter Card	November 2022 to 14 December 2022	Replacement - 5,725		

Voter Statistics Breakdown and Distribution for the 2022 General Election

Of the 693,915 registered voters, 348,348 are males and 345,567 are females.

The breakdown by age is as follows:

Voter Stats by Age		Percentage of the NRV
18-20	36,085	5.20%
21-30	156,060	22.49%
31-40	158,781	22.88%
41-50	126,366	18.21%
51-60	103,772	14.95%
61-70	71,648	10.33%
71-80	31,247	4.50%
81+	9,956	1.43%

Out of the 693,915 registered voters, the oldest Fijians registered on the National Register of Voters ["NRV"] as at 31 October 2022 are two female voters who are both 107 years old. They reside in the Western and Northern Divisions respectively.

Full Name	Date of Birth	Address	Division	Age	Gender
Sgkhina	09/11/1914	Solove Rd, Wailevu, Labasa	Northern	107	Female
Latchmi Mrs	01/04/1915	23, Kuata Street, Simla, Lau-toka	Western	107	Female

The gender and age breakdown by Division is as follows:

Division	Gender	18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81+
Central	Male	8231	36746	35187	26385	20358	13431	5459	1521
	Female	8547	36467	34119	26030	20958	15019	6842	2351
Western	Male	6300	27383	30805	25191	20208	13454	5327	1485
	Female	6542	28072	29043	23406	19630	14613	6934	2438
Northern	Male	2548	11049	11465	9752	8474	5288	1935	612
	Female	2715	10346	10058	8434	7766	5444	2795	971
Eastern	Male	647	2906	3331	2583	2385	1674	727	216
	Female	512	2185	2828	2108	1941	1345	705	261
Overseas	Male	19	573	1138	1408	1085	716	283	63
	Female	24	333	807	1069	967	664	240	38
Total		36,085	156,060	158,781	126,366	103,772	71,648	31,247	9,956

Divisional Breakdown

The Central Division makes up the largest percentage of the NRV at 43% which equates to 297,652 voters. In the Central and Western Divisions, there are more females as opposed to males who had registered to vote.

The Western Division has 260,831 voters in total making up 38% of the NRV while the Northern division made up 14% with 99,652 voters. The Eastern division had 26,354 registered voters at 4% while overseas voters make up 1% of the voter roll with 9,427 voters.

Division	Total	Percentage
Central	297,652	43%
Western	260,831	38%

Northern	99,652	14%
Eastern	26,354	4%
Overseas	9,427	1%

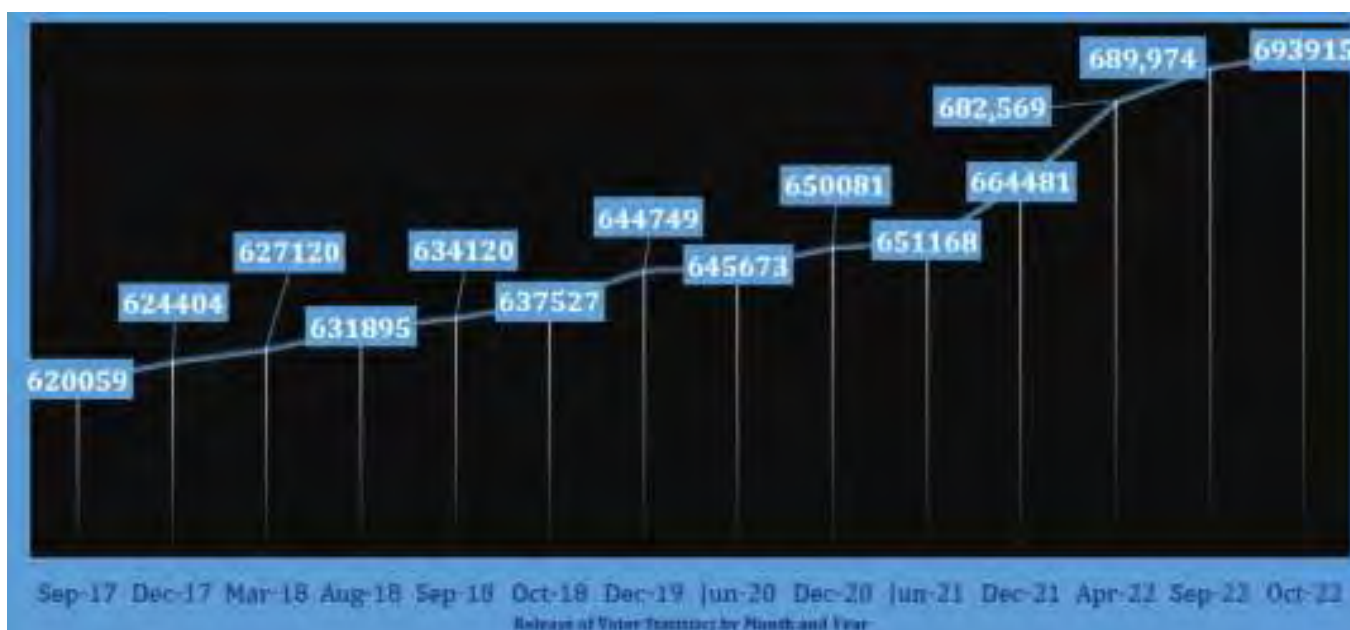
A total of 606,092 voters were identified to be eligible to vote on Election Day and 77,907 voters voted during Pre-poll voting period while 9916 voters applied for Postal voting.

Below is a table with the breakdown of the voters registered by Divisions and by the Voting Method

Voters Registered by Division Breakdown by Voting Method				
Division	Total Poll Day	Total Pre Poll	Total Postal	Total Registered
Central	274,457	18,177	5,017	297,651
Eastern	7,004	19,099	251	26,354
Northern	82,544	16,130	978	99,652
Western	233,529	24,501	2,801	260,831
Overseas	8,558	0	869	9,427
Total	606,092	77,907	9,916	693,915

Voter Registration Trends

The graph below shows the voter registration trends for the last 5 years.



The trend between June 2021 and April 2022 reflects a major impact event which was the expiry of the Green coloured VoterCard followed by the amendments to the law and then the subsequent voter registration drives.

Within that period, the Fijian Government had also rolled out its COVID-19 assistance programs that required people to present a valid voter ID. It was evident that the voter card was the most recognized ID used in Fiji and this led to a massive increase in the number of registrations.

Between April 2022 to October 2022, it was noted that the trend increased but then the curve started to flatten indicating a consistently high rate of voter registration which is common drawing closer to elections. The trend was relatively similar between March 2018 and September 2018 as the nation headed into the 2018 General Election.

31 October 2022 was the last day of voter registration, the FEO served 9,608 voters while 1,029 Fijians registered to vote for the first time.

When the FEO had commenced with the Ad-hoc Voter Registration Drive in October of 2021, just over 200,000 people were holding onto the blue coloured voter cards, however, during the election period there were over 600,000 voters with the blue voter cards.

In addition, the process of using mobile registration teams increased the accessibility to voter registration services. Voters who were unable to reach the FEO's VSCs due to illness or disabilities were given this opportunity to request for mobile registration services and would be assisted through home visits.

Below is the breakdown of mobile request received by each Division:

Mobile Registration	
Divisions	Total Mobile Request Received
Central	954
Western	379
Northern	212
Central	100
Total Received	1,645

Overseas Registration

The FEO was not able to conduct overseas voter registration in 2021 due to the global travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The FEO in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs embarked on the possibility of placing voter registration kits at the various Fiji Missions overseas and enabling Fijian citizens to access voter registration services.

The below mentioned Missions worked with FEO to carry out voter registration services:

MISSION	LOCATION
Fiji High Commission Canberra	19 Beale Crescent DEAKIN ACT 2600 Canberra, Australia
Fiji High Commission Wellington	31 Pipitea Street Thorndon Wellington, 6011 New Zealand
Fiji Embassy Geneva	Avenue de France 23 (6th Floor B) 1202 Geneva Switzerland
Fiji High Commission London	34 Hyde Park Gate South Kensington London SW7 5DN United Kingdom
Fiji Embassy Washington DC	1707 L St NW #200 Washington, DC 20036 United States

Fiji Embassy Tokyo	Noa Building (14th Floor) 3-5, 2-chome Azabudai Minato-Ku Tokyo 106-0041 Japan
Fiji Embassy Abu Dhabi	Tower 3., Floor 13 Etihad Towers Corniche Road Abu Dhabi United Arabs Emirates
Fiji High Commission New Delhi	C – 1/10 Vasant Vihar New Dehli 110 057 India

Later in May 2022 when travel restrictions were lifted, the FEO was in a better position to send voter registration teams to countries which had opened up its borders to Fiji which included Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and United Kingdom. In total, there were 3 phases of overseas registration.

Below is the Overseas Voter Registration Coverage and Statistics:

OVERSEAS REGISTRATION DRIVE PHASE I, II & III TALLY				
Date	Country	New Registration	Correction	Total Registered
15/05/2022 - 23/05/2022	Australia	165	843	1,008
19/05/2022 - 25/05/2022	New Zealand	135	246	381
Total - Phase I		300	1,089	1,389
08/07/2022 - 21/07/2022	USA	93	404	497
08/07/2022 - 18/07/2022	New Zealand	53	230	283
09/07/2022 - 19/07/2022	Australia	58	457	515
16/07/2022 - 18/07/2022	Canada	3	6	9
Total - Phase II		207	1,097	1,304
22/08/2022 - 08/09/2022	UK	84	110	194
02/09/2022 - 11/09/2022	USA	11	54	65
Total - Phase III		95	164	259
Total Engagement Phase I, II & III		602	2,350	2,952

Name Change Application

After the laws were changed to allow voters to register using names on their birth certificates, the FEO also facilitated the name change request received at the VSCs and from the field registrations from the period of October 2021 till October 2022.

Below is the tally for the same:

Name Change Application Summary			
Gender	2021	2022	TOTAL
Male	45	15	60
Female	140	61	201
Total Number of Application Received/Processed	185	76	261

Data Cleaning

There was a continuous data cleaning exercise conducted to remove deceased voters from the NRV. These Voters were identified via Confirmation of Deceased form received by our VSCs and Confirmation of Deceased forms from the Turaga-Ni-Koro's during the Voter List Verification and also via Secondary verifications of the Data received from Births, Deaths and Marriages and Fiji National Provident Fund. This resulted in a total of 28,866 voters confirmed deceased who were removed from the NRV between 01 January 2019 to 31 October 2022.

As also required by law, voters serving imprisonment of 12 months or longer cease to be a registered voter. As such, 752 voters were flagged as inmate and removed from the NRV under this category.

Voter List

Voter List Format

The Voter List format for the 2022 General Election was very similar to the format used for the 2018 General Election. The only change was the inclusion of the Bar codes and the QR code in the cover of the voter page of the voter List. This was done to assist during the post-election voter list analysis where the bar codes would save time and reduce human error during the analysis.

The Voter Lists format for the 2022 General Election remained the same:

- Paper Size – A3.
- Orientation – Portrait

The order of Voter Information in the Voter List is as follows:

- Surname
- First Name and Other Name
- Voters photo
- Gender
- VoterCard Number
- Residential Address
- Signature

A similar format was used for the Saint Stephens polling venue for special polling arrangement made for voters, who had registered overseas but were in Fiji and did not apply for postal voting.

The names for the Overseas Registered Voters were divided into 3 Voter Lists. All Voter Lists were utilized at the polling station. The Voter List had names of more than 650 voters, however, the maximum number of voters that can vote in a Polling Station was 650.

Provisional Voter List Publication and Verification

In accordance with the Electoral Act 2014, the SoE may publish the provisional voter list for each polling station as approved by the EC on or before 30 September of each year except in an election year.

In preparation of the 2022 General Election, the Provisional Voter List was published 4 times before the Writ was issued on 31 October 2022.

Provisional Voter List - Verification					
PVL	Date	Location for PVL Verification	Total PVL Received HQ	Total Verified	Number of Deceased
PVL I Verified	04/10/2021-03/12/2022	Rural Areas	1,929	1,358	1,907
PVL II Verified	17/01/2022-04/02/2022	Rural and Urban Areas	1,929	1,128	6,917
PVL III Verified	15/06/2022-29/06/2022	Rural Areas	2,000	1,778	7,555
PVL IV Verification (Public Verification)	17/09/2022-25/09/2022	Urban Areas	1,349	16,996	84

Final Voter Lists

According to Electoral Act, the Final Voter List was printed and distributed to the respective polling stations for the use of the election officials at the polling station. The Final Voter List was printed after the postal voters were confirmed on 26 November 2022. A total of 2,053 Voter List were printed, 618 for Pre-Poll and 1,435 for Election Day.

Summary of Final Voter List printed are as follows:

Division	Pre-Poll	Election Day	Total
Central	113	468	581
Eastern	189	275	464
Northern	141	250	391
Western	175	442	617
Total Printed	618	1,435	2,053

Polling Venues for the 2022 General Election

For the 2022 General Election, a total of 1,468 polling venues were approved by the SoE to facilitate Prepoll and Election Day polling.

In comparison to the number of polling venues used in 2018, an additional 32 polling venues were identified, assessed and approved for the 2022 General Election.

Breakdown of Polling Venues for the 2022 General Election:

DIVISION	ELECTION DAY VENUES	PREPOLL VENUES
Central	316	109
Western	303	175
Northern	202	140
Eastern	33	189
Overseas	1	0
TOTAL	855	613

Breakdown of Polling Venues for Central Division:

AREA	ELECTION DAY	PRE-POLL	TOTAL
Korovou	39	9	48
Naitasiri	36	41	77
Namosi	9	14	23
Rewa	37	15	52
Serua	21	12	33
Suva	96	11	107
Tailevu	78	7	85

Breakdown of Polling Venues for Western Division:

AREA	ELECTION DAY	PRE-POLL	TOTAL
Ba	31	16	47
Keiyasi	7	29	36
Lautoka	64	37	101
Nadarivatu	0	12	12
Nadi	47	14	61
Nadroga	74	18	92
Ra	48	49	97
Tavua	32	0	32

Breakdown of Polling Venues for Northern Division:

AREA	ELECTION DAY	PRE-POLL	TOTAL
Bua	39	23	62
Cakaudrove	33	9	42
Macuata	60	34	94
Saqani	9	17	26
Seqaqa	26	20	46
Taveuni	18	16	34
Tukavesi	17	21	38

Breakdown of Polling Venues for Eastern Division:

AREA	ELECTION DAY	PRE-POLL	TOTAL
Kadavu	9	62	71
Lau	0	67	67
Lomaiviti	24	51	75
Rotuma	0	9	9

Polling Venue Assessments

The FEO conducted a series of polling venue assessments [“PVAs”] exercises to examine the status of polling venues that were used during the General Election. These assessments ensured that the venues were available, accessible and suitable for the conduct of polling.

The following table details the PVAs carried out during the preparation for the General Election;

POLLING VENUE ASSESSMENTS	DATES
PVA 1	23 March 2021
PVA 2	04 October 2021
PVA 3	28 February 2022
PVA 4	02 May 2022
PVA 5	20 May 2022

Ongoing monitoring of polling venues were conducted by the Divisional Managers and their teams from the month of May and right up to Election Day on 14 December 2022.

With the establishment of the Geographic Information System [“GIS”] map bank posts the 2018 General Election, the FEO was able to create more effective, applicable and user-friendly maps for the operational teams to meet their preparations and planning purposes.

Publication of Polling Venue Lists

The Provisional Polling Venue Lists and Polling Venue Maps were displayed for public inspection and scrutiny multiple times during the build up to the 2022 General Election. The FEO also sought responses from Political Parties and other stakeholders on their feedback and comments on the locations, suitability and accessibility of polling venues.

The Provisional Polling Venue Lists were published on the following dates;

POLLING VENUE LIST PUBLICATION	DATES
Polling Venue List Publication 1	25 May 2020
Polling Venue List Publication 2	30 June 2021
Polling Venue List Publication 3	19 February 2022
Polling Venue List Publication 4	25 May 2022
Polling Venue List Publication 5	07 November 2022

Dates for consultation with Political Parties.

POLLING VENUE LIST CONSULTATION WITH POLITICAL PARTIES	DATES
First Consultation with Political Parties	28 June 2021
Second Consultation with Political Parties	31 Jan 2022

The Final Polling Venue List for the 2022 General Election was approved and published on 07 November 2022, after the issuance of the Writ. The Final Polling Venue List was published in both the local newspapers and was also available on the FEO official website.

Methods of Voting

Pre-Poll Voting

The venues for Prepoll voting were identified using the criteria outlined in section 82(2) of the Electoral Act. The final list of polling venues and polling times were published and gazetted on 19 November 2022. Pre-poll voting was scheduled between 05 to 09 December 2022. The schedules considered factors such as numbers of voters per venue, remoteness of the pre-poll location, time taken to travel to those locations and transport networks. The Military camps, naval bases, police stations and corrections facilities were also under Prepoll voting.

The FEO on many occasions published and informed voters particularly those in the pre-poll areas on the processes for pre-poll voting. The KYE campaign teams distributed the Election Information Booklets containing information on pre-poll voting and also conducted awareness sessions with members of these villages, settlements and communities.

During the last 2 years, the FEO had been working very closely with the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and Rural & Maritime Development in ensuring that information pertaining to pre-poll voting and polling times were continuously disseminated and circulated during village meetings, gatherings and KYE campaigns. The Divisional Commissioners teams consisting of the Roko Tui's, Provincial Administrators and District Officers assisted the FEO teams in ensuring that voters living in the pre-poll areas were well informed and updated on the processes for pre-poll voting. FEO Area Officers maintained good relations with Turaga-ni-Koro's and arranged for staff accommodation with them.

A new initiative by the FEO was the placing of pre-poll voting signages in all pre-poll venues. This idea complimented the previous process of issuing letters to Turaga ni Koros and advising them of the day and polling time of their village or community.

The materials required by each pre-poll team was prepared in Suva and sent to the Divisional Offices for dispatch to each team before the commencement of the pre-poll voting period. Each pre-poll team was required to conduct polling at various pre-poll venues according to the circuits and schedule given to them. A variety of transport methods including by road, boat, helicopter and fixed wing aircraft were used.

Breakdown of Prepoll Venues and number of Teams.

Division	Prepoll venues	Total number of voters	Number of Pre-poll teams
Central	109	18,177	14
Western	175	24,501	22
Northern	140	16,130	16

Eastern	189	19,099	44
TOTAL	613	77,907	96

For the 2022 General Election, a total of 96 teams were deployed to conduct polling for the 613 Pre-poll Venues. Each team comprised of a Team Leader (Presiding Officer) and up to 3 other staff.

While the teams were deployed in the fields, they had daily contact with their Area Officer to report on voter turnout or any issues that may have arisen during the day. Each team was accompanied by Police Officers to ensure that the polling materials were safe at all times.

Pre-Poll schedules were adhered to as planned, however, in some cases there were amendments made due to unforeseen or uncontrollable circumstances e.g. weather, tides, and so forth. Where it was necessary to reschedule polling, approval was sought from the EC and changes were made accordingly.

In most instances the amount of time allocated for pre-poll at a particular venue was adequate for the turnout of voters. The polling times for the 2022 General Election were based on the plans and schedules of the 2018 General Election but slightly amended to suit the current situation in 2022.

The recruitment and deployment of staff from the Divisional and Area offices worked well for the purpose of pre-poll. It enabled the Divisional Managers to have good control of the pre-poll staff and the progress of the deployments.

The FEO developed a “*Presiding Officers Pre-Poll Journal*” for each pre-poll team. This Journal was developed by the Divisional Managers and the FEO GIS team to be used by PO’s during the duration of the pre-poll voting period. Each pre-poll team was given a customised Journal specifically developed to outline the activities and program the team would undertake during the 1-week pre-poll voting period.

Election Day

Polling took place on 14 December 2022. The majority of the polling stations opened at 7:30am and closed at 6.00pm before counting began. Polling Agents and MOG representatives were permitted into the polling stations to observe the polling and counting processes. The FEO ensured that the maximum number of voters at any polling station was 650. Voters were assigned to a polling station closest to their residential address.

The final numbers of polling venues for Election Day which was published on the Notice of Poll on 16 November 2022 were as follows:

DIVISION	ELECTION DAY VENUES	TOTAL NUMBER OF VOTERS
Central	316	274,457
Western	303	233,529
Northern	202	82,544
Eastern	33	7,004
Overseas	1	8,558
TOTAL	855	606,092

Postal Voting

Postal Voting is a voting platform that allowed voters residing overseas and those that could not attend to a polling station to cast their vote. All voters were given the opportunity to apply for Postal Voting from 30 October 2022 till 5pm on 23 November 2022.

Voters had the opportunity to submit their applications through the following platforms:

- Upload their application forms together with a copy of their VoterCard on the online portal: services.feo.org.fj/postal ; or
- Hand deliver their applications any FEO office.

All applications received by the FEO within the application timeline were checked and vetted to meet the full requirements. Out of the 12,201 applications received, 8,565 applications were received through the online portal and 3,636 applications were received directly from the FEO sub-offices.

All data were entered in the Postal Voting module that managed the Postal Voting Application in the 2018 General Election but was upgraded after the review which brought about some recommendations regarding the improvements to be incorporated to the Postal module.

A total of 9,994 applications were approved as compared to 11,257 in the 2018 General Election. Postal packages were sent to the nominated address of the voter as stated in their application.

The FEO engaged 2 courier companies who were responsible to deliver and collect postal packages to and from voters. DHL were responsible to deliver packages for overseas voters while EMS-Company delivered postal packages locally. FEO had to assist EMS-Company in delivering packages to areas that could not reach mainly the maritime areas. There was a total of 1,856 overseas registered Postal Voters and 8,138 Postal Voters were registered locally. Below is a table illustrating the total number of postal packages for the 2022 General Election:

Total Packages Sent	Total Packages Returned
9,994	9,012

From the 9,012 packages returned to FEO, a total of 7,529 were admitted and sent to the National Count Centre to be counted, 1,300 were rejected and 184 received late.

The Postal Centre was based at the Nasese Centre for Training and Development [“CTD”] under the Security of the Fiji Police Force. There was a total of 90 Postal Administrative Assistants engaged by the FEO who were responsible for the vetting of postal applications, data entry, pre-packing and packing of postal packages, receiving of postal packages, scanning of returned postal packages and delivery and collection of postal packages to stakeholders.

All packages sent to voters were vetted by the Postal Clerks to ensure that each package had the following:

- Voter Instruction Booklet
- One Ballot Paper
- Secret Envelope
- Transmission Envelope
- Prepaid Returned Envelope
- Postal Voting Process Pamphlet
- If couriered, a returned prepaid courier satchel

After vetting all applications received on 23 November 2022, the total Approved Postal Voters were 9,916 but later the Postal team located 78 applications on the online portal which were submitted on

time and fully met the requirements. These applications were later authorized by the SoE increasing the total Postal Voters to 9,994.

Voter Instruction Booklet [“VIB”]

A total of 1,135 389 VIBs were printed by Quality Print Limited and Star Printery which were 2 companies awarded the tender to print the VIBs.

The initial tender agreement was written on 17 March 2022 which stated that Star Printery was to print 670,000 while Quality Print was to print 430,000 booklets in a time span of 14 days each. Due to the increase in the final number of voters collated at the end of the EVR drive the final number of booklets needed for each division increased as well to cater for the contingencies and the increase in the final number of voters.

As such, the 2 companies were required to print the following:

Name of Company	Extra Books Printed	Total Number of Books Printed
Star Printery Limited	15,350	694,030
Quality Print Limited	5,250	441,359
Total Books Printed		1,135,389

The printing of the booklets commenced from Wednesday 18 November 2022 and concluded on Wednesday 01 December 2022.

A total of 42 staff were engaged to conduct Quality Assurance [“QA”] for the VIBs being printed.

VIB For Divisional Awareness Drives

Below is the breakdown of books distributed to the respective divisions for their Awareness Drives:

Division	Number of Books Delivered
Central	180,000
Western	148,000
Northern	67,000
Eastern	26,359
Total Distributed	421,359

Newspaper Inserts

As part of the awareness, the 2 main newspaper companies namely Fiji Times and Fiji Sun were engaged to insert VIBs in their newspapers on Saturday 26 December 2022. This was to encourage voters that had access to newspapers to get a copy of the VIB. Below is the total number of VIBs distributed through the newspapers:

Name of Company	Number of Books Distributed
Fiji Times Limited	18,000
Fiji Sun Limited	35,000
Total	53,000

PRE-POLL AND ELECTION DAY VIB's

The printers also printed VIBs that were to be handed to voters inside the polling stations on Prepoll and Election Day. The required number of books to be printed plus the contingencies came to a total of 660,818 books.

Election Day Break Down		
Division	Voters	Contingency
Central	277,763	280,790
Eastern	7059	7210
Northern	83,321	84,430
Western	204,561	206,508
Total	572704	578,938
Prepoll Break Down		
Division	Voters	Contingency
Central	18,694	19,250
Eastern	19,300	20,130
Northern	16,337	16,970
Western	24,755	25,530
Total	79,086	81,880

The books were checked by a team of QA and they found some defects on the books. Since the Printers were printing in mass amounts, the defective books were taken out and replaced accordingly.

Below is the breakdown of the books printed by the 2 companies which was sent to the warehouse to be delivered to the respective polling stations for Pre-poll and Election day:

Name of Printing Company	Number of Books Printed
Star Printery Limited	441,359
Quality Print Limited	694,030
Total Dispatched to Warehouse	1,135,389

Internal Audit for 2022 General Election

The Internal Audit function is an ongoing function at FEO and has been established since March of 2015. In a non-election year, all the Internal Audit activities are solely carried out by the Internal Auditor, however, during election year, an Internal Audit team is setup.

For 2022 General Election, an Internal Audit team was setup to assess and evaluate the implementation of the electoral processes against the approved FEO plans, standard operating procedure and the electoral laws. The team comprised of 8 staff and was led by the Internal Auditor / Manager Command Centre.

4 Audit Assistants from the Internal Audit team were appointed and trained in April 2022 and the same team audited the "Dress Rehearsal of the 2022 General Election" in May 2022. These 4 staff had previously worked in the 2018 General Election and were familiar with the election processes and activities. The training and the dress rehearsal gave these Audit Assistants a refresher on the election processes and to become aware of the changes that had taken place since the 2018 General Election. The remaining 4 staff were appointed within the Writ period.

These Audit Assistants were sent to the various trainings conducted on the electoral processes before and during the Writ period to gain knowledge and understanding of the election activities. An Internal Audit checklist was compiled for the 2018 General Election and was reviewed for the 2022 General Election to guide the Internal Audit team to carry out audits for various election activities, and where possible Internal Audit programs were also developed for the Audit Assistants to further assist them in carrying out their roles.

The legal framework and FEO policies and procedures were used as a guide to evaluate whether all electoral procedures were followed for the election areas.

From the announcement of the election date to when the final results were released, the Internal Audit team either worked in 8 hour shift or 10 to 12 hour shifts. On the last day of voter registration, being Writ day, the Internal Audit team visited randomly selected registration centers to determine if electoral processes were followed. They also went at 6.00pm on the same day to randomly selected centers to observe if voters were not allowed in line after 6.00pm to get registered or change details on their VoterCard.

Similarly, during the printing of the ballot papers at the Printery, the Internal Audit team was situated at the Printery around the clock 24 hours a day to observe the printing process until printing was over. Further, during packing of sensitive materials at the Warehouse, the Internal Audit team observed the entire packing process to ensure correct material and correct quantities of materials were packed for each polling station. On the day of the Election, the Internal Audit team visited the polling stations in Central Division on a sample basis and observed the processes on polling. At the National Count Centre and National Result Centre, which was operational for 24 hours, the Internal Audit team was present for the entire process carrying out checks and verifications.

During the Pre-Election and Election Day period, the Internal Audit attended the following election related events:

- Close of Voter Registration and relevant notices at the VSC's for general public
- Final data cleaning process
- Provisional Voter list before printing
- From receiving of Postal Voting applications, data entry, scanning, QA process, barcoding, close of postal voting application process, placement of ballot boxes for returned packages to filing process
- Receiving of Nomination forms from various registered political parties, data entry and close of Nominations
- National Candidates draw and the Candidates listing
- Verification of the printed copy of the Final Voter list before dispatching to Warehouse for packing
- Packing of sensitive materials at the Warehouse for prepoll and election day polling venues
- Publication of Polling Venues
- Election Official Refresher Training
- Presiding Officer Refresher Training
- Area Office Training
- Hub Leader training
- National Results Centre Management training
- National Count Centre training
- Training for ballot paper production team and printing of Ballot Papers
- Training for VIB and VIB production QA process
- Checking of election materials by POs at the hub offices
- Verification of Postal Voting
- Opening of polls and closing of closing of polls
- Counting of Pre-Poll and postal votes at National Count Centre
- Data entry of results from Protocol of Results, scanning and filing of Protocol of Results at National Results Centre

The Internal Audit update report was presented to the SoE, DSoE, Deputy DOpS and the Directorate heads based on the electoral activities attended by the Internal Audit team each day. It contained issues discovered during Audit process and suggested recommendations for immediate corrective actions. The FEO will rely heavily on the findings of the Internal Audit from the 2022 General Election to review and strengthen election practices for the future.

National Count Centre

The National Count Centre was set up at the Vodafone Arena. The setup provided sufficient area for the construction of counting cubicles for the 100 counting teams and ample space for storage areas. All pre-poll voting and postal ballots were counted at the National Count Centre starting from 6pm on 14 December 2022 and continued until 15 December 2022.

The recount teams were used to conduct the counting for the boxes that were under quarantine. The recount team finished on the early hours of 17 December 2022. All counting was undertaken in the presence of polling agents, international observers, Police Officers and the EC members were present for some of the count.

The National Count Centre operated 7 12-hours shifts with 2 Count Managers per shift. Shift times were from 6pm to 6am and 6am to 6pm. Count at the National Count Centre commenced at 6pm on the night of Election Day and was presided over by the EC Chairperson.

The Count Managers ensured that the correct procedure for the counting of ballot papers were followed by the counting teams and also explained the processes to polling agents, international observers and police Officers. In addition to the Count Managers, Count Supervisors consisting of trainers were also engaged to monitor the Count teams. There were 10 Count Supervisors per shift.

Positions and staff per shift are depicted in the table below:

Position	No. of Staff per Shift
Managers	2
Supervisors	10
Administration	5
Runners	10
Count Staff	400

After the ballot boxes from 618 pre-poll stations and 13 postal stations were counted, a copy of the PoR from each station was displayed at the National Count Centre designated area. The counting of ballot papers and movement of ballot boxes within the premises was conducted under the security of the Fiji Police Force. At the end of the counting and processing of results on Sunday 19 December 2022, all ballot boxes were stored in shipping containers and transported to the FEO's main warehouse where it was under 24 hours security of the Fiji Police Force.

Recount of Ballot Boxes

The SoE ordered a recount for polling stations that recorded high number of invalid votes or had results which could not reconcile when entered into the RMIS due to errors recorded by POs. The counting and recount procedures were very easy to follow. Recount teams consisting of EOs, Trainers and the TDU staff were on standby to conduct recounts when ordered by the SoE.

Quarantine Ballot Boxes

Ballot boxes were quarantined for a variety number of reasons including missing POR's, PO Record Books or Voter Lists in the TEE, These items were retrieved from the ballot boxes under the observation of party agents and observers.

The National Count Centre Training

The National Count Centre ToTs for the 20 Field Trainers was conducted on 09 December 2022 by the Operations Coordinator for Training with the assistance of the Technical Adviser for training Ms Sarah Kedzie. This was a full day training conducted at the FEO Headquarters in Toorak. The count centre training of POs and APOs' was held on 10 December to 12 December 2022.

Below is the breakdown of staff trained:

Dates	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
Saturday, 10/12/22	39	75	72
Sunday, 11/12/22	76	73	66
Monday, 12/12/22	98		
TOTAL	213	148	138

Central Processing Centre

On Election night and right up to the announcement of the General Elections Results the Divisional Managers were stationed at the CPC.

The CPC was setup to manage the administrative activities of the National Count Centre. The primary activities involved were as follows:

- Matching of Tamper Evident Envelopes ('TEE') against its respective ballot boxes
- Dispatch of TEE and ballot boxes to the National Count Centre
- Provide solutions pertaining to those ballot boxes and TEE's that have issues
- Dispatch original copy of PoRs to the National Results Centre
- Filing of sensitive documents including the voter list, Presiding Officer's Record Book and copy of Protocol of Results

A total of 70 Administrative Assistants were engaged for the CPC Operations not including a Recount Team which was also part of the CPC Team responsible for any recount that was required.

A total of 618 Prepoll ballot boxes was dispatched to the CPC from the Logistics team and it was the responsibility of the CPC Team to match the ballot boxes against its respective TEE's. Apart from the Prepoll ballot boxes, a total of 13 Postal ballot boxes was also dispatched to the National Count Centre by the CPC Team.

The CPC was also responsible for receiving the 1,453 Election Day TEE's. The original copy of the PoRs was dispatched to the National Results Centre and the PO Record Book together with the Copy of the PoRs were filed at the CPC.

Command Centre Operations

The Command Centre operations for the 2022 General Election was set up as the information hub and the monitoring centre for all the election activities.

The Command Centre was established on 08 August 2022 with the appointment of the Manager Command Centre.

The Command Centre carried out following core functions for election related activities:

- Monitoring of the 2022 General Election timeline on a day to day basis and providing update to the senior management
- Gathering and analyzing of statistics for various election activities where applicable
- Monitoring of risk registers for all election activities and highlighting high risks to the relevant Directors
- Gathering incident records from all election activities, reporting to senior management and maintaining records of it
- Managed the Call Centre – 1500 platform
- Media monitoring
- Weather monitoring together with gathering information on road, bridge, crossings closure
- Providing power outages and water disruption alerts to staff

A total of 33 staff were appointed for the operations of the Command Centre and they were rostered into 2 shifts:

Position	No. of Staff
Manger Command Centre	1
Shift Supervisor	2
Data Analysis and Monitoring	10
Media Monitoring	6
Callers	14
Total	33

The Data Analysis and Monitoring team was responsible for gathering statistics for election activities, monitoring the election activities timeline at the set checkpoints and obtaining Area Office activities update through Divisional Offices.

This team was trained on the various Apps and systems of FEO to retrieve and analyze information such as RaMEO, My Polling Assistant App, Results Web, Nominations dashboard, Postal Voting dashboard, Logistics dashboard and GIS dashboard.

The Media Monitoring team was responsible for monitoring the local and overseas TV stations on the Fiji election, monitor local newspapers for election news coverage, monitor social media for election content and these updates were compiled included in the Command Centre report and submitted to the senior management. The Media Monitoring team of Command Centre underwent training from the Communications team of the FEO as well as on how to carry out media monitoring for the Organisation.

Media Monitoring was also tasked to disseminate weather bulletins to the Divisional Offices (7-day lookout and daily bulletin), provide update on the road, bridge and crossing closure to the relevant staff, provide power outages and water disruptions alerts to the staff.

These information and alerts were provided on a timely interval to the staff responsible for executing election processes for their better decision making.

The Call Centre was setup on 10 October 2022 for the 1500 platform which was activated with the official launch of the 1500 SMS platform on 18 October 2022.

The Call Centre received 2,615 calls in total since its establishment until the final results were released. Trend showed that most calls were received in the pre-polling week and on the Election Day.

The Call Summary were as follows:

Number of Calls Received	2,615
Type of Network:	
Vodafone	2,387
Digicel	213
Telecom	15
Type of Query:	
Knowing Polling Venue (Election Day)	2,280
Mobile EVR Request	5
Election Information (Training / Employment Confirmation)	71
Postal Voting Application Request / Postal Package Enquiry	131
Prepoll Voting (Wanting to know Polling Venue)	51
VSC Locations / Timing	16
Assisted Voting	4
Wanting to know about certain Election Process	15
General	42

Daily reports were compiled and submitted to the senior management which included SoE, DSoE, relevant Directors and the Deputy Director Operations.

The reports were sent in 2 intervals, at 2pm and 8pm daily. The report included update on the election timeline activities, statistics for the election process that was in progress on those individual days, update on the Area Office and Divisional Office activities, incidents, call log summary and media monitoring content.

Command Centre on a daily basis was also analyzing the risk registers received from the staff responsible for executing the election activities and updates on the high risks were provided to the Directors. The Command Centre operations ceased on 21 December 2022.

Free Public Transportation on Election Day

- 2022 General Election

Pursuant to section 75 of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji 2013, the EC has the responsibility to conduct free and fair elections in accordance with written law governing elections in Fiji. In section 3 of the Electoral Act, 2014, the EC is permitted to make instructions consistent with the Act and the Constitution that are necessary for the transparent and orderly conduct of free and fair elections.

In this regard, it is noted that in 2014 and 2018, the EC engaged the voluntary services of Bus Operators in Fiji to provide transportation on Election Day to members of the general public. This arrangement did not involve any fixed schedules, payment arrangements and was largely based on the discretion of the operators. There were many locations (such as inner city and town roads and the distant rural locations) where bus services were not available. It was also noted that despite the availability of services in some areas, the turnout was lower than expected.

From the experiences of the 2 previous General Elections, the EC decided that the FEO needed to directly plan, prepare, execute and monitor the provision of transportation services during Election Day.

The FEO having critical information on the organisation of polling venues around the country were best suited to carry out this project with various relevant stakeholders in order to ensure that transportation was available for voters to access on Election Day. The FEO worked with established government machinery to ensure that this service was both beneficial and cost effective for all those involved.

While the EC left the minor mechanics of the arrangements to the FEO operations team, a few essential guiding instructions were given to the FEO. The FEO had to work with the relevant stakeholders on the ground such as the Advisory Councillors and Turaga Ni Koro's as they were equipped with the necessary local area knowledge and knew the local communities they were part of.

After various consultations with those involved, it was decided that bus services in urban areas would be on hourly intervals beginning as early as 7am on Election Day and that the frequency would be consistent with the high demand in the morning, mid lunch and afternoon to cover for the last-minute rush.

The FEO also setup a Call Centre with a Toll-free number 1503 to handle transportation queries from voters. The Call Centre was operated and managed by 40 staff from the Land Transport Authority ["LTA"], the Ministry of Rural and Maritime and the Ministry of Transport.

The Advisory councilors were assigned to monitor the PSV vehicles that were engaged to provide transport for voters travelling to and from polling venues on the day. Consultation workshops were carried out by the FEO's Divisional teams together with the representatives from the LTA to analyze the various routes and the vehicle types best suited for the various areas.

A transport plan was developed thereafter to map the various routes that will be used by transport operators on Election Day and this plan was shared with all DAC members for their feedback and responses.

A total of 218 Advisory Councilors were engaged to monitor this project around Fiji.

The table below summarizes the number of advisory councillors engaged per Division.

Breakdown of Advisory Councillors	
Division	DAC Required
Central	66
Western	84
Northern	62
Eastern	6
Total	218

Free Public Election Day Transportation Breakdown:

SUMMARY OF PSV VEHICLES USED IN THE 2022 GENERAL ELECTION			
Division	Bus	Carrier	Total
Central	57	15	72
Western	54	34	88
Northern	34	33	67
Eastern	0	6	6
Total	145	88	233

Election Security

The FEO worked very closely with the Fiji Police Force [“FPF”] in the planning and implementation of a security plan to ensure proper security around the 2022 General Election, including the various electoral processes leading up to the election period. An election taskforce was set up by the FPF to coordinate activities between the FEO and FPF and this proved to be successful as operational activities between the 2 Institutions were organized and implemented in a timely manner.

The FEO shared its Operational Plan with the FPF election taskforce in order for the FPF to identify and highlight security issues that were likely to arise and develop strategies on addressing them. Since the FPF was tasked with providing security for the 2022 General Election, it was only appropriate that they developed their security plan based around the FEO’s Operational Plan and activities. It was also critical that FPF understood the deployment plans of the FEO teams especially during Pre-poll voting and Election Day polling as police officers provided security on the ground for FEO officials and election materials.

The FPF provided security for FEO in the following areas:

- FEO HQ Office
- FEO main Warehouse
- Postal Voting Centre
- FEO Divisional Offices/ Warehouses
- Pre-poll Voting
- Election Day Polling Venues
- National Count Centre
- National Results Centre
- Central Processing Centre
- Star Printery – venue for Ballot Papers Production
- Logistics – delivery and dispatch of election materials
- Hub Offices

The FEO had also shared its Polling Venues Provisional List with the FPF for their security analysis and the feedback from the FPF personnel on the ground were positive.

The FPF also allowed the FEO to use its police stations and posts around the country as Hub offices. These Hubs were storage points during the dispatch and return of election materials to and from the polling station during the Election Day polling.

Election Disability Access Working Group

The Election Disability Access Working Group [**“EDAWG”**] was set up in 2016 to look at ways in making the electoral processes inclusive for persons with disabilities in the 2018 General Election. A Terms of Reference [**“TOR”**] was signed by the FEO, the National Council of Persons with Disabilities, the Pacific Disability Forum and 13 Organizations of Persons with Disabilities. This TOR was reviewed in 2021 for the 2022 General Election and the EDAWG members started meeting in early 2022 to discuss ways in developing, implementing and promoting inclusive and accessible electoral processes for all voters especially for persons with disabilities.

In February 2022, the Pacific Community [**“SPC”**] through its Governance programme which is being supported by the United States Agency for International Development signed a Memorandum of Understanding with FEO to offer technical support and electoral assistance to EDAWG in order to achieve its goal and purpose.

This collaboration assisted the EDAWG and the FEO in producing the following materials for every Polling Station during Pre-poll Voting and Election Day Polling:

- Assisted Voting Steps Diagram (Flip-chart)
- Assisted Voting Steps Easy to Read Guide (Text in English)
- Assisted Voting Steps Easy to Read Guide (Braille)
- Voter Instructions Booklet (A4 Format)

The following materials were also developed for the EDAWG members and the various Organizations for Persons with Disabilities [**“OPD’s”**].

- Assisted Voting Steps Easy to Read Guide (English, Hindi, I-Taukei, Audio and Braille)
- Voter Instructions Booklets in Braille

Also, SPC through the International Foundation for Electoral Systems assisted the FEO in reviewing and updating the ‘*Assisted Voting*’ section in the Presiding Officer’s Manual and developing a corresponding video for Presiding Officer’s during their refresher trainings.

The FEO also procured magnifying glasses and portable voting booths for wheelchair users inside the polling stations. These voting booths were also used by the FEO election officials when they were assisting voters to vote outside of the polling stations.

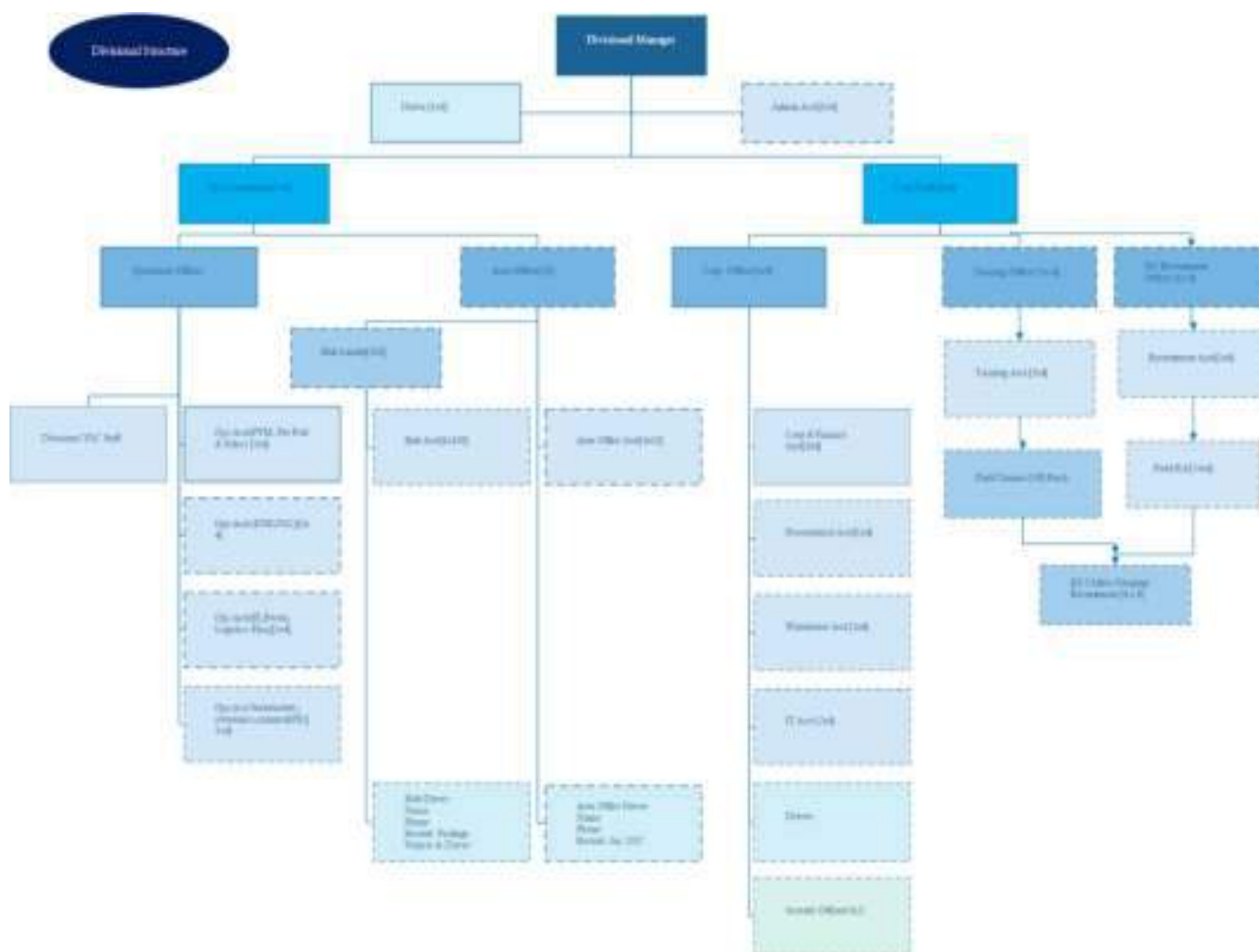
2022 General Election Dress Rehearsals

In May 2022, the FEO conducted a Dress Rehearsals for all activities that would be taking place after the issuance of the Writ. This exercise enabled Project owners to test their processes, identify areas that needed improvement and provided an opportunity for staff to simulate and familiarize themselves with the activities that would be taking place once the Writ was issued. This exercise also gave an opportunity for Management to evaluate the preparations for the 2022 General Election and assess the state of readiness of the FEO.

Divisional Offices

A major challenge faced in all the Divisions was the distribution of voters and their geographical locations which made planning and scheduling of events for the different projects quite difficult and demanding.

Below is the approved Divisional Structure that was used for the 2022 General Election:



Divisional Office Key Events

Below are the key dates for the Divisional Offices during the election operations:

Key Event(s)	Key Date(s)
Opening of Divisional Office	03/01/2022
Disciplinary Forces Registration	17/01/2022 – 28/01/2022
Opening of Voter Services Centers: Central - VSC Suva - VSC Korovou - VSC Nausori - VSC Nasinu - VSC Navua - VSC Vunidawa Eastern - VSC Kadavu - VSC Levuka Northern - VSC Labasa - VSC Savusavu - VSC Seaqaqa - VSC Nabouwalu - VSC Taveuni Western - VSC Lautoka - VSC Sigatoka - VSC Nadi - VSC Ba - VSC Tavua - VSC Rakiraki - VSC Keiyasi	Ongoing 25/10/2021 10/11/2021 10/01/2022 06/09/2021 03/05/2022 27/05/2022 01/12/2021 Ongoing 10/01/2022 02/05/2022 02/05/2022 29/12/2021 Ongoing 04/10/2021 08/10/2021 08/10/2021 21/02/2022 08/10/2021 11/11/2021
Nationwide Registration & Awareness Drive: - KYE 1 - KYE 2	28/02/2022 – 13/04/2022 01/08/2022 – 03/09/2022
School Registration Drive	19/04/2022 – 29/04/2022
3 Days Massive Urban Rollout: - Central Division - Western Division	23/09/2022 – 25/09/2022 30/09/2022 – 02/10/2022
Provisional Voter List (PVL) Display: - PVL 1 - PVL 2 - PVL 3 - PVL 4 (Public PVL Verification – Urban Centers) - PVL 5	04/10/2021 – 03/12/2021 17/01/2022 – 04/02/2022 15/06/2022 – 29/06/2022 17/09/2022 – 18/09/2022 & 24/09/2022 – 25/09/2022 20/11/22 – 01/12/2022
Writ Day Mass Voter Registration Rollout	29/10/2022 – 31/10/2022
Opening of Area Offices	31/10/2022
Distribution of Prepoll Letters and Pasting of Prepoll stickers	20/11/22 – 01/12/2022

VIB Distribution – Prepoll Areas	20/11/22 – 01/12/2022
VIB Distribution – Door to Door	02/12/2022 – 11/12/2022
Prepoll Period	05/12/2022 – 09/12/2022
Hub Office Operations	09/12/2022 – 15/09/2022
Election Day	14/12/2022
Close of Area Office	24/12/2022
Return of Materials to Divisional Office	01/01/2023 – 31/01/2023
Close of Divisional Office	31/01/2023

The Divisional Managers are required to develop logistics and deployment plans and schedules of visits for all projects undertaken in the Divisions. This together with budget consultation with the project owners and stakeholders is vital for the successful execution of the various projects that were required to be conducted in the field. Upon approval of plans and budget by management, the project was then implemented, coordinated and monitored by the Divisional teams.

Divisional Managers also ensured that voter registration services and awareness programs were conducted throughout the country. This meant that the programs and schedules had to cover all communities, villages, settlements and all urban locations. Secondary schools and Tertiary institutions as well as Business houses and communities were covered during these projects. This was important as FEO needed to ensure that all Fijian citizens were given an opportunity to register, update their voter information and understand the voting process for the 2022 General Election. Multiple voter registration and awareness programs were conducted prior to the Writ of the 2022 General Election was issued and FEO made every effort to attend to every request that was made through the Divisional offices. Ongoing registration teams were available to attend to mobile requests and home visits for those voters that were unable to visit the VSCs for voter services.

Projects that were monitored by Divisional Managers:

Projects	Work Period	Activity
Divisional Office Operations	November 2021 to March 2023	• Identification and assessment of suitable office space • Purchase of Divisional Office materials • Ensure staffing requirements for Divisional Office is provided by relevant Department • Timely Setup and Opening of Divisional Office • Manage Divisional Office operations • Oversee Divisional Office Fleet • Manage and monitor Divisional Office and project Budgets which falls under the Division • Endorse Divisional vendor payments • Monitor staff attendance, leave and TOIL • Conduct stock take of all FEO assets in the Division • Return all FEO Assets to HQ Warehouse • Ensure timely closure of Divisional Office
Polling Venue Assessments	04 January 2022 to 14 December 2022	• Weekly polling venue update • Polling Venue Monitoring • Polling Venue Assessment

KYE 1 & 2	KYE 1 – 26 February to 13 April 2022 KYE 2 – 01 August to 03 September 2022	• Training of pool AA's • Arrangement of accommodation, transportation and allowances • Deployments of teams for awareness and engagement with the voters • Distribution of promotional items • Conduct Voter Survey
EIB and Brochures Distribution	January to October 2022	• Submit EIB requirements for the Division • Deploy teams for distribution of EIB's • Monitor distribution
Electronic Voter Registration	26 February to 02 April 04 July to 22 July 2022	• Deployment of Teams to conduct voter registration services • Arrangement of accommodation and transport • Data Back Up
Provisional Voter List Display	PVL 1 - 04 October to 03 December 2021 PVL 2 – 17 January to 04 February 2022 PVL 3 - 15 June to 29 June 2022 PVL 4 – 17 September to 25 September 2022 PVL 5 – 20 November to 01 December 2022	Deployment of teams to distribute the Provisional Voter List Arrangement of accommodation, transport and allowances Gathering reports or feedback from voters on displacements and errors
Election Official Recruitment	04 October 2021 to 27 December 2022	• Identification and Assessment of Recruitment venues • Arrangement of Recruitment Venues with vendors • Training of Recruitment Assistants (RA's) • Arrangement of Accommodation, transportation and allowances for RA's • Deploy RA's for Recruitment • Contracting of EO's • Facilitate contract replacement during Prepoll and E-day • Submission of attendance and necessary documents for processing salary • Project monitoring and report
Election Officials Training	04 October 2021 to December 2022	• Identification and Assessment of Recruitment Venues • Arrangement for Field Trainers TOT's • Creation of Training Plan • Arrangement of training venues and training logistics • Deployment of Field Trainers • Project Monitoring and reporting
Voter Services Centers	December 2021 to January 2023	• Identify and asses Office Space for Voter Services Centers • Arrangement of office space with vendors • Facilitate tenancy agreement signing • Purchase of VSC materials • Open and monitor VSC operations

Area Office Operations	04 January 2022 to December 2022	• Identification and Assessment of Area Office • Arrangement of Office space with Stakeholders and vendors • Purchase of Area Office Materials • Review and update of Area Officers Manual • Opening and Closing of Area Office
Hub Office Operations	09 December to 15 December 2022	• Identification, Assessment of Hubs Office • Preparation of Hub Leaders Manual • Hub Leader Training • Preparation of Hub Booklets • Opening and Closing of Hub Office

Writ to Writ Period Activities:

Projects	Work Period	Activity
Mass Voter Registration Roll Out Plan- Writ Day	• October 2022	• Arrangements with business communities on available spaces for hot spots in towns • Arrangement of accommodation and transport for teams • Final collection of data backups and materials
Postal Voting	• 31 October to 14 December 2022	• Receive and submission of Postal Voter Applications • Daily display of Approved Postal Voter List • Receipt of Postal Packages in VSC's, Area Offices and Divisional Office • Collection and Return of Postal Packages to Postal Center
Voter Instruction Booklet Distribution	• Prepoll Areas – 20 November to 1 December 2022 • Door to Door – 2 December to 11 December 2022 • Distribution of VIB's to Business Houses and VSC's – 25 November to December 11	• Develop VIB deployment plan and Budget • Arrangement of accommodation and transport • Deployment of Teams to Distribute VIB • Monitoring and update
Prepoll Voting	• June 2021 to December 2022	• Develop Deployment Plan and Budget • Conduct Polling venue assessment for prepoll venues • Liaise with internal and external stakeholders on Prepoll teams travel, accommodation, allowance and other prepoll requirements • Review and update Prepoll Journals • Monitor Team deployment • Sought necessary approvals for any change in the approved schedule
Election Day	• June 2021 to February 2023	• Polling venue Assessment for Eday venues • Confirm and arrange extra Election day requirements with internal and external stakeholders • Monitor delivery and collection of election materials • Ensure security of election materials through collaboration with the Fiji Police Force • Monitoring of Election day activities

Election Day	- Pre-poll: 05 December to 09 December 2022 - Election Day: 14 December 2022	- Review and assessment of Election Day venues - Identification of extra election day requirements - Arrangement of polling venues with venue owners - Monitor the distribution and collection of election materials - Ensure election materials security in collaboration with Fiji Police Force - Address and escalate issues faced on Election day - Monitor and follow up on EO's and vendor payments
Return of Election Materials to the FEO Warehouse	16 December 2022 to 31 January 2023	- Liaise with relevant internal stakeholders on Distribution and Collection plan for Election materials - Facilitate the Distribution and Collection of materials from Area Offices - Conduct Stock take of materials - Providing proper inventory updates to responsible department - Return materials back to the FEO Warehouse

Area Offices in the Divisions

During the build up and preparations towards the 2022 General Election, each Divisional Office was responsible for the administration and management of the various Area Offices attached to their Divisions. Each Divisional Manager was in charge for the planning, execution and monitoring of operational projects and activities in their areas of operation.

Due to the single national constituency boundary, the FEO had drawn up its internal electoral boundaries for ease of logistics operations during Prepoll and Election Day polling. In total, there were 25 Electoral Areas managed by 23 Area Officers.

To ensure that the Divisions share the workload and cope with the logistics of the Election Day operations, the areas were evenly distributed. This allowed the Eastern Division to monitor 2 areas from the Western Division and 2 areas from the Central Division on Election Day. However, for Prepoll voting, the Divisions managed logistics operations within their own respective Prepoll areas.

Below is the breakdown of the FEO areas looked after by the 4 Divisions during election operations.

Division	Electoral Areas	Electoral Offices	Prepoll		Election Day		
			Polling Venue	Polling Station	Hubs	Polling Venue	Polling Station
Central	8	8	109	113	31	206	468
Eastern	4	2	189	189	19	223	275
Northern	5	5	140	141	21	202	250
Western	8	8	175	175	30	223	442
Overseas						1	
Total	25	23	613	618	101	855	1435

The detailed breakdown by area is provided below:

Division	Area	Prepoll		Election Day		
		Polling Venue	Polling Station	Hubs	Polling Venue	Polling Station
Central	Navua	35	35	3	33	42
	Suva – Raiwaqa	-	-	7	32	100
	Suva - Nabua	13	17	7	43	109
	Suva – Nasinu	-	-	6	30	95
	Suva – Nakasi	-	-	5	37	91
	Vunidawa	41	41	3	31	31
	Nausori	11	11	-	-	-
	Korovou	9	9	-	-	-
	TOTAL	109	113	31	206	468
Eastern	Lomaiviti	51	51	2	24	24
	Kadavu	62	62	1	9	9
	Rotuma	9	9	-	-	-
	Lau	67	67	-	-	-
	Rakiraki (Western)	-	-	3	48	51
	Tavua (Western)	-	-	3	32	46
	Korovou (Central)	-	-	4	42	46
	Nausori (Central)	-	-	6	68	99
	TOTAL	189	189	19	223	275
Northern	Labasa	42	42	6	60	94
	Seaqaqa	16	16	3	26	31
	Nabouwalu	23	23	3	39	39
	Taveuni	16	16	2	18	22
	Savusavu	43	44	7	59	64
	TOTAL	140	141	21	202	250
Western	Sigatoka	14	14	8	66	90
	Lautoka	55	55	5	38	100
	Lautoka - Nadi	-	-	5	37	87
	Lautoka - Lomolomo	-	-	6	38	83
	Ba	16	16	5	34	72
	Keiyasi	28	28	1	10	10
	Tavua	13	13	-	-	-
	Rakiraki	49	49	-	-	-
	TOTAL	175	175	30	223	442
TOTAL		613	618	101	854	1,435

Human Resources in the Division

Similar to the 2018 General Election, the 4 Divisional Offices were only responsible for the organisation of recruitment venues and tests for Election Officials while the actual recruitment and appointment of staff were managed by the HR team located at HQ.

Other HR processes listed below were handled by the Divisional teams for their Divisional staff:

- Staff timesheets and leave applications
- Monitoring overtime approvals for accumulations of Time Off In Lieu [**“TOIL”**] and Meal Allowance Claims
- Signing and witnessing of Divisional and project staff contracts
- Monitoring and ensuring that the corresponding Divisional positions are filled on time
- Recommending inhouse trainings for Divisional staff with respect to their individual assigned responsibilities, their capabilities and the benefits the training will have for the division
- Manage and monitor proper processing of staff exits at the end of each contract or upon staff resignation by liaising with IT and warehouse section in the division on return of issued materials/ office assets and HR division at the main headquarters on confirmed applicable leave entitlement

Apart from the Election Officials engaged as PDWs, below is the breakdown of the number of staff that worked in the Divisional Offices and its sub offices:

Divisions	No. of Divisional Office Staff	No. of VSC Staff	No. of Area Office Staff (Area Officer, AO Assistant, Driver)	No. of Hub Office Staff (Hub Leaders and Hub Assistant)	Total Number of Staff
Northern	25	15	15	42	97
Western	22	21	24	72	139
Eastern	25	4	6	6	41
Central	25	21	24	82	152

Election Officials – Contracting and Recruitment in the Divisions

Each Division was assigned 3 Election Officials Recruitment Staff; A Corporate Officer Recruitment with 2 Recruitment Assistants to help with the recruitment process in the Divisional Offices.

The Recruitment Officer under the supervision of the Corporate Coordinator and Operations Coordinator developed the Recruitment Deployment Plan for the Division, identified the materials and resources that were needed and the associated costs required for the execution of the project.

While the Divisional Corporate section facilitated the hiring and payment of the recruitment venues and fleet; the Divisional Operation Officer looked for suitable venues with proper venue assessment to check for availability of required power source, public amenities, proper water source and accessibility.

This collaboration work within the Division has proven to be very efficient in securing the most accessible and centrally located Recruitment Venues and also in obtaining venues with very low to no costs at all. Decentralising this responsibility to the Divisional Offices ensured that proper accountability for venue payments were carried out in a timely manner.

Another benefit of having the Divisional Office take up the responsibility of monitoring recruitment and contracting of their Election Officials was the ability of the staff to effectively and efficiently replace Election Officials due to their localised area knowledge. The recruitment teams continued to organise staff replacements right up to the morning of Election Day while the respective Area Officers and their Area Hub Leaders were assisting in ensuring that proper contracts were signed and witnessed on time for the Recruitment teams. These ensured proper and quicker verification with the HQ Elections Officials Team and Finance in processing their payments on time.

Below is the breakdown of Election Officials engaged for Prepoll and Election Day for the 2022 General Elections:

Divisions	Total Number of Prepoll Staff	Total Number of Election Day Staff	Total Number of Election Officials (Prepoll & Elections Day)
Northern	63	1,166	1,229
Western	87	2,441	2,528
Eastern	176	1292	1,468
Central	60	2,668	2,728

Stakeholder Engagement

The Divisional Managers established networks with its relevant stakeholders on the ground. The 2 most important stakeholders were the Divisional Commissioners under the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and the Divisional Police Commanders of the Fiji Police Force. Meetings and workshops were conducted with these stakeholders in order to strengthen partnership and coordination during the delivery of the 2022 General Election.

In addition to the above, the Divisional Managers also had multiple stakeholders to work with in order to meet to their needs and requirements for delivering the required projects and activities. The list of stakeholders included:

- Roko Tui's
- Provincial Administrators
- District Officer's
- DAC Members
- Town Administrators
- School Principals and Managers
- Government Shipping Services
- Polling Venue Owners
- Registration Venue Owners

Procurement and Asset Management

Procurement of goods and services for the 2022 General Election were mainly handled by the Divisional Offices. Under the Divisional Corporate Team, the Divisional Corporate Coordinator oversees the procurement and purchasing responsibilities with the assistance of the Corporate Officer and the Administrative Assistant. The team is responsible for the following activities:

- Raise Procurement Forms, source quotations and conduct evaluations with recommendations on required purchases or hiring of services for the divisions
- Liaise with vendors on confirming purchases or hiring and follow up on invoices for payments
- Ensure clearance of payments to vendors for the services rendered in the divisions
- Conduct vehicle checks for the divisional vehicles to ensure proper maintenance and servicing of the vehicles
- Work closely with the Divisional warehouse assistant on proper inventory checks and maintenances of assets and materials in the division
- Ensure that Vehicle needs for the projects is met and manage the servicing of hired vehicles
- Manage and monitor the contracting and hiring of the required fleets for the divisional logistical transport needs for distribution of materials and election officials during Pre-poll and Election Day
- Organise and manage the hiring of public transportation for the hub area voters during election day.

Finance

The Divisional Managers and Divisional Corporate Coordinators manage their own Divisional accounts during the Writ to Writ period.

The Divisional coordinators were tasked with the responsibility of identifying accountable advance needs for the different projects in the Divisions according to the FEO Operational plans, and further requesting approvals from the various Directors in order to disburse these funds effectively and efficiently so as to not hinder the timely delivery of these projects. Proper retirements and documentations of these acquittals were carried out with strict monitoring mechanisms in place by the Financial Controller and team to ensure that funds were disbursed according to the approved budget and financial processes of the FEO.

Other financial responsibilities from the Divisional offices under the Corporate Services Team are:

- Timely submissions of Divisional staff timesheets and all other project staff in the division, including the Area Officers and their respective staff
- Update, manage and monitor TOIL and leave applications for the staff
- Liaise with HQ HR team and finance on issues relating to staff payments, payslips, payments of meal allowances and applicable eligible leaves and resignations
- Checks and verified drivers running sheet and fuel invoices for HQ Transport and procurement team facilitations
- Check and ensure that all proper invoicing and payments for the services and purchases in the Divisions is completed with proper documentations maintained

Election Simulation Exercises

Election simulation exercises on various projects during the Writ to Writ period were conducted in the Divisions to familiarize staff on approved processes and timelines. This was also a great opportunity for project owners to test procedures to ensure that coordination and execution of these processes with other relevant internal or external stakeholders would work.

While a few smaller simulation exercises were conducted within the Divisions, an extended and extensive Dress Rehearsal program for the 50 days Writ to Writ period compressed to a 12-day exercise was conducted by the FEO to ensure that all activities would run smoothly without any major hiccups or obstacles.

Running simulation exercises was very beneficial to the Divisional teams especially to the Area Officers as they would be executing logistics operations in their different areas of responsibility. This was also an opportunity for these officers to understand the important election timelines, the inter-linking of projects and the significance of their role in the field. These simulations also allowed the Divisional Managers to address issues and areas which were of a concern, identify the gaps and ascertain possible solutions moving forward.

Election simulation exercises conducted in the Divisional offices included the following:

- Election Dress Rehearsal
- Logistics Distribution of Sensitive Materials from Warehouse to Area Office
- Receive and Dispatch of Sensitive Materials using EMS
- Postal Voting – Distribution and Collection
- Mass Roll Out Plan – Close of Registration on Writ Day and Collection of Data and EVR Materials

Special Projects

Community Engagement Project

The FEO since April 2022 began a Stakeholder Engagement on Electoral Education Project between the FEO and the United Nations Development Programme [“UNDP”]. The Community Engagement Project was then undertaken by the FEO as the lead Implementing Partner in the project. The SoE activated a Special Project Task Force to undertake this project. The project was undertaken in 2 phases. Phase 1 was the Community Election Advocate and Phase 2 was the School Elections Advocate.

Phase 1 – Community Election Advocate

From 19 April 2022 until 22 August 2022 the SPTF had trained and certified 208 Community Elections Advocates, these advocates were representatives of Women’s and Youth Groups from Religious Organisations, Settlements and Villages as well as Turaga-ni-Koro’s and DAC from all the 4 Divisions in Fiji, Central Division, Northern Division, Western Division, Eastern Division (Lau Group), and members of the EDAWG.

The FEO in total has trained and certified 47 Women representatives from Women’s Groups from villages and settlements in Fiji.

Phase 2 – School Elections Advocate

The schools were enlisted through the assistance and approval of the Ministry of Heritage and Arts to engage a Social Science Teacher and a Year 13 Student to attend a 1 full day training workshop. The workshops were conducted from 17 August 2022 until 12 September 2022 in Suva, Labasa, Savusavu, Rakiraki, Ba, Nadi, Sigatoka, Lautoka, Navua and Nausori. Through these workshops the FEO was able to cover majority of the schools in Eastern, Central, Western and Northern Division.

The general aim of the project was to train and certify participants in the knowledge of Elections, namely; How to Vote, When to Vote, Voter Registration and other important election information in Fiji. Through this initiative the FEO has trained and certified 276 students and teachers. The FEO through this project has been able to through School Elections Advocates to reach 6,514 eligible voters from 87 respective school communities.

Stakeholders Forum on Enhancing Voter Participation

On Wednesday 30 March 2022, the FEO hosted a Stakeholders Forum on Enhancing Voter Participation at the Grand Pacific Hotel. This forum was organised to address the low voter turnout recorded for the 2014 and 2018 General Election and look at ideal best practices and options to create greater participation for the 2022 General Election.

The FEO invited various local and international stakeholders to attend the Forum, the Forum was divided into various sessions that contained presentations and panel discussions. International stakeholders included representatives from Australia and New Zealand Electoral Commission as well as representatives from IFES. Local stakeholders included representatives from Political Parties, Grassroots Youth and Women’s Groups, Academics and members from the EDAWG.

The Forum also laid the framework for the Community Elections Project run by the FEO and UNDP. The discussions and deliberations from the forum also assisted the FEO in implementing other special projects for the 2022 General Election.

Conclusion

The journey in preparing for the 2022 General Election was not an easy one given the challenges of the Covid-19 Pandemic. However, that did not deter the FEO in its preparatory efforts.

The FEO is grateful to all of its stakeholders, partners and donors for their support, cooperation and contributions towards the FEO's conduct of the 2022 General Election.

There are a lot of processes and activities that the FEO will be reviewing and lessons learnt from the 2022 General Election that will assist the organization to strategise in preparing for the next General Election.



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26 February to 2 April 2022



ANNEX 7



Multinational Observer Group

2022 Fiji Election

FINAL REPORT

March 2023



The opinions expressed in this report reflect the views of the Multinational Observer Group of the 2022 Fijian General Elections and not individual participants in the mission or their sending Governments or Organisations.

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I. Executive Summary

Ahead of Fiji's 2022 General Election process, culminating on Election Day on 14 December 2022, the Multinational Observer Group (MOG) deployed more than 90 observers across Fiji. Led by Australia, India and Indonesia, the MOG was comprised of participants from 16 countries and two regional organisations: the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, and the Melanesian Spearhead Group. The MOG observed all key activities relating to this electoral process, including: pre-poll, postal and Election Day voting across the entire country; the counting of votes at polling stations; and counting and tallying of votes in Suva.

The MOG has made the following key observations about the 2022 General Election and recommendations for potential areas of improvement for future elections.

Key Observations

- The MOG observed a well-run general election process, without significant irregularities or impediments during pre-polling, postal voting or Election Day voting. The MOG assessed that Fijian voters were able to exercise their right to vote freely and the outcome of the General Election broadly reflected their will. Voting took place in a calm, peaceful environment.
- Counting proceeded in a systematic, methodical and transparent manner, consistent with pre-published Fijian Elections Office (FEO) guidelines. A glitch was experienced on the evening of 14 December 2022 with the *FEO Results App* (a digital publication platform separate from the system used for official tallying of votes), resulting in erroneous provisional results data being displayed on the app. This was quickly rectified but created some negative perception issues. The incident did not impact in any way the accuracy of the final results.
- The FEO is a highly competent and independent institution which has continued to build on lessons learnt from delivering the 2014 and 2018 General Elections. This included a significant improvement in voter awareness and information to support Fijian voters in exercising their right to vote.
- The MOG observed the functions and operations of the FEO to be highly proficient. The MOG assessed that the FEO was prepared well and delivered a transparent and credible electoral process in a professional manner. The MOG observed that the FEO facilitated accessible voting, including for voters with disabilities.
- During the campaign period, Fijian media facilitated some robust debate, especially on television, radio and social media. Parties and candidates were generally able to convey their political messages to the electorate. However, a number of non-government stakeholders reported to the MOG concerns regarding increased restrictions on some previously available formats of election-related activities, such as public opinion polls and events, and the public discourse ahead of the General Election.

- The MOG also observed during its wide-ranging public consultations an existing perception of restrictions in the media environment, a general sense of apathy in the political process due to low confidence in its fairness, and some confusion around voter eligibility and voter identification requirements.
- While voter turnout as a percentage of registered voters was 68.3 percent (lower than the 71.9 percent in the 2018 General Election), the number of registered voters and total voters increased. The FEO's professionalism contributed to this sound voter turnout.

Summary of Recommendations

The success of the 2022 General Election process presents an opportunity for Fiji to strengthen its electoral system, administration and institutions in ways that will sustain Fiji's electoral democracy into the future. The MOG offers the following recommendations for Fiji's consideration to continue improving the integrity and effectiveness of its electoral processes. The recommendations which might be perceived as going beyond the Terms of Reference of the MOG (see MOU establishing the MOG in attachment on page 72) but yet potentially useful to strengthening Fiji's electoral system and democracy are labelled as "aspirational".

Concerning the Electoral System and Operations

1. Review restrictions on election related activities for domestic and traditional Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), particularly in relation to candidate-development activities, which will result in wider participation in the electoral system by all sectors of society, including women (page 15).
2. Conduct an external audit of the National Voter Register to ensure accuracy and public confidence (page 17).
3. Clarify the validity of voter cards and other allowable documents early ahead of next election to maximise voter turn-out (page 18).

Concerning the Legal Framework

4. Consider the appropriateness of the severe criminal penalties in electoral legislation, including the *Electoral Act 2014*, and whether the desire to deter criminal conduct, ultimately diminishes public confidence in the EC and FEO (aspirational recommendation, page 20).
5. Consider whether the length and detail of the *Electoral Act 2014* affects the public's readability and understanding of the legal framework regarding elections, to the detriment of public confidence. Consistent with recommendations in 2018, the MOG also recommends relevant Fijian institutions work towards consolidating and simplifying relevant electoral legislation, including the *Electoral Act 2014* (aspirational recommendation, page 20).

6. Review the appropriateness of the Supervisor of Election's (SoE) powers, particularly in subsections 6(1A) - (1C) of the *Electoral Act 2014* (page 23).
7. Ensure best efforts are undertaken to use full parliamentary consultation processes when amending electoral legislation, including providing advice to relevant decision-makers regarding the appropriateness of using Standing Order 51 when passing amendments to election-related legislation (aspirational recommendation, page 23).

Concerning the Electoral Authorities

8. Develop and better publicise procedures for the EC to ensure due process in considering complaints against the SoE, political parties and the FEO (page 26).

Concerning the Pre-election and Campaign Environment

9. Review the appropriateness of section 115 of the *Electoral Act 2014*, especially when its effect on free political debate is considered cumulatively with the newly inserted subsections 110A and 144A (aspirational recommendation, page 28).
10. Develop guidelines for the conduct of Ministers, Members of Parliament and the civil service when the government is in 'caretaker mode' to reinforce public confidence in a level political playing field (aspirational recommendation, page 35).
11. Require all political parties to report campaign expenditure and consider setting campaign expenditure limits (page 37).
12. Consider providing technical support and potentially public funding for the costing of parties' political manifestos to ensure voters have reliable policy information (aspirational recommendation, page 38).

Concerning Public Awareness and Civil Society Participation

13. The MOG recommends that the EC and FEO strengthen efforts to build productive partnerships with civil society organisations during both the pre-election phase and following the issuance of the Writ, and to actively work with CSOs in voter awareness, information, and education activities (page 41).
14. Consider how domestic observers and other international non-governmental observers can be incorporated into future electoral processes (page 41).

Concerning Women and Voters with Disabilities

15. All stakeholders continue their efforts to promote women's representation and safeguard gender diversity in the electoral system, including as candidates; and that gender safeguards be integrated into any electoral system reforms (page 42).
16. Continue the work of the Elections Disability Access Working Group (EDAWG) to develop better support services for voters with disabilities (page 43).

Concerning the Media and Elections

17. Review the Media Industry Development Authority of Fiji's (MIDA) mandate and operations and relevant procedures to create greater certainty and clarity for media organisations (aspirational recommendation, page 46).
18. Review the operation of media blackout requirement in the law and providing greater clarity through published guidelines (page 46).
19. Review the appropriateness of the EC guidelines on the conduct of opinion polls and their effective constraint on the media's ability to contribute to public discourse and political accountability (page 46).

Concerning FEO's Communications and Publication of Results

20. Review the policies and methods of communication of important election information, including provisional and final results, and consider a simple analogue back-up, such as a manual results tally board, to complement the digital *FEO Results App* with strengthened verification protocols (page 58).

II. Multinational Observer Group's Mission

The MOG for the 2022 Fijian General Election was constituted at the invitation of the Fijian Government. It was comprised of co-chairs from its three co-lead countries Australia, India and Indonesia, as well as observers from 16 countries, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the Melanesian Spearhead Group. The co-chairs were: The Hon Rebekha Sharkie MP and the Hon Josh Wilson MP representing Australia, Mr Dharmendra Sharma, representing India and HE Ambassador Muhsin Syihab, representing Indonesia.

Before the election, the Fijian Government and the Governments of Australia, India and Indonesia agreed to the Terms of Reference¹. These guaranteed the MOG freedom of movement and consultation, and mandated it to observe and evaluate a range of electoral processes and to assess whether or not arrangements for the election assisted Fijian voters to exercise their right to vote freely and whether or not the outcome of the election broadly represented the will of Fijian voters². The Terms of Reference also invited the MOG to offer recommendations for improving the integrity and effectiveness of future electoral and related processes.

On 31 October 2022, longer-term observers commenced operations in Fiji. By Election Day, the MOG had expanded to 97 accredited longer-term and short-term observers, from a number of professional backgrounds including parliamentarians, accredited diplomats, government officials and technical experts. Observers were from Australia, Canada, the Federated States of Micronesia, France, India, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of Korea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, the United Kingdom, the United States and Vanuatu as well as representatives of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the Melanesian Spearhead Group.

The MOG established a Secretariat in Suva and an online presence through the MOG website, Facebook and Twitter accounts to facilitate public access and awareness of the MOG's activities. It also engaged frequently with local, regional and international media, across all media platforms, including television, radio, digital, print and social media, and in all major Fijian languages. The MOG also hosted press conferences and gave door-stop interviews at major milestones, for example, for the release of the Interim Statement on 16 December 2022. Members of the MOG Secretariat stayed in Fiji for one week following the Election Day. Other MOG observers have remained in Fiji at their respective diplomatic missions at the time of issuing this Report.

MOG observers took a comprehensive, objective, and independent approach to assessing the electoral environment in Fiji, taking into consideration Fiji's legal framework, including the Constitution and electoral laws, making technical observations about a wide range of electoral processes, and evaluating Fiji's electoral institutions and practice against good international practice.

¹ Signed on 18 October 2022. Available at: <https://www.feo.org.fj/storage/2022/10/TOR-Endorsed-18.10.22.pdf>.

² See Terms of Reference, paragraph 1 (h).

Observers consulted a wide range of stakeholders, including: the FEO and EC; Fiji's political parties; a number of institutions, including the High Court, Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Fiji Police Force and the Republic of Fiji Military Force; media professionals; civil society and community groups across the country; the Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission; international, regional and multilateral organisations; paramount chiefs; religious leaders and organisations; academics and student groups; and local communities and members of the public.

In advance of the election, longer-term observers visited urban and rural communities across Fiji to consult communities and assess the FEO's preparations, including communities on 20 inhabited islands in the Lau group. During pre-poll voting (5 to 9 December 2022), MOG observers visited 115 polling stations in remote and maritime areas. MOG members were also present during the process of authentication of postal voting procedures.

During polling on Election Day on 14 December, observers visited some 450 polling stations across all four divisions out of 1437 polling stations. During its observations the MOG attended almost one in three (31 percent) of all polling stations.

III. Electoral System and Operations

Fiji gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1970 and held elections in 1972, 1977, 1982 and 1987 before successive military coups interrupted its democratic development. Following two coups in 1987, Fiji held elections in 1992, 1994, 1999; following a coup in 2000, Fiji returned to elections in 2001 and again in 2006. Following the coup of 2006, Fiji held elections in 2014 and 2018.

The 2014, 2018 and 2022 elections were based on the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji of 2013 (the Constitution) adopted by the then interim government. The 2013 Constitution established an electoral system with a single national constituency in place of the local and multiple ethnically based constituencies that had characterised Fiji's earlier electoral systems. The Constitution introduced a 'national' (as opposed to a 'communal') method for voting, with Fijians of all ethnic groups listed in a single voter register.

Fijian's brand of Open List Proportional Representation

Since before independence, Fiji have used different majoritarian systems, whether first past the post (FPTP) or alternative vote (AV). A major characteristic of both systems was the use of reserved seats for ethnic or communal groups within various constituencies, which sometimes had the effect of voters having more than one vote. The current system, an open list for proportional representation (OLPR), replaced the previous systems with communal constituencies and introduced the *one voter-one vote* principle.

The 2013 Constitution introduced a new electoral and parliamentary system: the new Parliament is unicameral, had 50 members in 2014, and 51 in 2018; for the 2022 general elections the number of MPs to be elected was increased to 55, reflecting the growth of the Fijian population.

Parliamentarians are elected for a four-year term through OLPR with the whole country as a single constituency. Political parties present lists of candidates, which cannot exceed the total number of MPs to be elected. Voters vote for candidates, and a vote for the candidate is also a vote for the party of that candidate. The open list system results in the popular vote determining the final order of the party list.

The system also establishes a 5 percent threshold for the party to contest the election, meaning that parties and independent candidates who do not receive at least 5 percent of the total number of votes cast will be set aside and their votes disregarded. Usually, thresholds under this system are estimated on the total number of valid votes; Fiji's basing the threshold on total votes cast, raises the barrier, and actually increases the threshold percentage.

The system uses the D'Hondt formula for the allocation of seats to candidate lists. As opposed to the 'largest remainders' group of formulas, the D'Hondt formula belongs to the 'highest average' group, where the formula minimises the number of votes that need to be left aside.

The Fijian modality of OLPR does not allow for special measures for the representation of women or any other population group.

Observations

The removal of ethnic voting blocs and the establishment of a new electoral system with a single voter roll, was positively received by the public, and in the MOG's view, continues to receive popular support.

Fiji's OLPR systems differs from other similar proportional representation (PR) systems internationally in that for contesting the elections, the prominent actors are candidates, not political parties. In fact, political party affiliation is not made explicit in the voting process. In the past, the electoral authorities were not allowed by law, to provide information that voters could use to identify the party affiliation of candidates. At the same time the law prevents voters carrying any information into the station containing identification of the affiliation of candidates, provided by political parties. In the lead to the 2022 electoral process the legal provisions were modified to allow the placement of the political party symbol next to each candidate on the candidates' national list (as was recommended by the MOG in 2018)³. This was presented in the Voter Instruction Booklet' produced by FEO and made available at each polling station to all voters before voting. The ballot paper itself only contains a number for each candidate (no name or party symbol).

Candidates are given a randomly drawn three-digit number, which is the only feature present on the ballot paper as prescribed by law. When choosing a candidate, the voter marks that candidate's assigned number. This approach is unusual for a proportional representation system

³ *Electoral Act 2014*, s 51(1A).

based on political parties' participation, and not exclusively on individual candidates, even in its open list version.

The OLPR has been criticised because it allows candidates to be elected with less votes than other candidates, yet the proportionality of the system refers to parties and not candidates; therefore, at the end of the day, it is the party vote that is decisive in the numbers of seats assigned in Parliament. Additionally, the system of allocating seats to party candidates is not based on the party's preferred list, but rather on the number of votes each candidate receives: voters choose their preferred candidates and parties receive seats based on the total number of votes received by all their candidates. Only after the vote, the number of seats for each party is determined and which of a party's candidates get elected. The system has been noted to slightly favour parties with strong known personalities and a more established base, which places some disadvantage to new and smaller parties, and independents.

Despite the lack of special measures, since the adoption of the new system, women's representation in Parliament has increased: from 4.3 percent in 1995 to 21.6 percent in 2018. Nevertheless, in 2022 only six women entered parliament, representing 10.9 percent of MPs in parliament.

Although no system can provide precise proportionality, different features of the system do affect proportionality, such as the magnitude of the constituency: the larger the number of seats, the greater the possibilities for better proportionality (55 in the case of Fiji, which is significant). Despite its wide use around the world, some stakeholders shared with the MOG their dissatisfaction with the D'Hondt formula being used in Fiji, as they felt it was not 'fair' enough, as it is thought to favour bigger parties and coalitions over scattered small parties.

The MOG notes that proportional systems around the world use different formulae, and that there is not one considered more 'fair' or 'democratic' than others. In Fiji's case, the threshold requirement, and the fact that independent candidates are allowed, make the system less proportional than it would be otherwise.

In general, proportional representation systems are supposed to promote inclusiveness, yet given the specific features of the Fijian version of PR, the opposite has happened, and political power has concentrated in a couple of parties, with little participation from newer, smaller parties. In 2014 and 2018 two parties received the major part of the seats: in 2014 FijiFirst had 32/50, SODELPA 15/50 and NFP 3/50; in 2018 FijiFirst had 27/51 and SODELPA 21/51 and only an additional party reached the 5 percent threshold (NFP, with 3/51).

In 2022, FijiFirst won 26/55 seats, PAP 21/55, NFP 5/55 and SODELPA 3/55. Despite the inclusion of a new political party in Parliament following the 2022 Election the MOG notes that the system has not widened representation with regards to previous majoritarian systems.

Independent candidates are allowed but are disadvantaged by the nature of the system chosen, including the 5 percent threshold. In fact, in 2014 there were only two independent candidates and none in 2018; there were two independent candidates in the 2022 elections. In any case,

independent candidates can only win one seat, regardless of the number of votes they get. There is no measure to allow ‘independent (non-partisan) candidate lists’ and in 2022, again, none were elected. The use of thresholds to qualify for seats is common around the world. There is no international principle determining what is an ‘acceptable’ threshold. Some interlocutors mentioned to the MOG, however, that they consider a five percent threshold in Fiji’s context inappropriate; a lower threshold, they proposed, might be desirable (three percent was often mentioned). In fact, the previous EC recommended in its 2014 annual report that the threshold provision be removed or, at least, lowered to 3 percent. Following the announcement of final results, MOG notes that of the nine parties contesting the election in 2022, only 4 reached the 5 percent threshold and none of the six parties with the lowest number of votes reached 3 percent.

If a seat allocated to a political party becomes vacant during the parliamentary term, the seat is allocated to the next candidate on the party’s list. The MOG notes that the open list, single constituency system of proportional representation requires a by-election if an independent, or party which has exhausted all candidates, vacates their seat – this would require a nation-wide election to fill one seat.

The fact that the whole nation constitutes a single, national constituency has also been criticised, arguing that such a large district magnitude discourages connections between voters and representatives. Defenders of the system argue that the nation was chosen as a single constituency in order, among other aspects, to resolve any contentious issues with the delimitation of constituencies and to encourage multi-ethnic voting.

Voting Modalities

Fiji uses three modalities for voting in its general elections: pre-polling, postal voting and Election Day polling. Voters for pre-poll and Election Day voting may cast their ballots only at the one polling station they were assigned to during the voter registration process.

Pre-polling

In the past, given the logistical challenges of its geography, Fijian elections were held over a number of days. In 2013, the new electoral system was designed to introduce a ‘one-day’ election. Nevertheless, authorities realised that it was necessary to service voters who reside in remote areas, in venues where the number of voters does not justify opening a polling station for a full day, and for residents of nursing homes, health facilities, prisons, as well as members of the disciplined forces. As a result of this operational necessity, ‘pre-polling’, an early, mobile modality of polling, was introduced. Voters registered at pre-poll venues must participate in pre-poll voting and are not allowed to vote on Election Day.

Postal Voting

Registered voters who live outside of Fiji or those who are unable to travel to a polling station may apply for postal voting. Postal voting is available only to voters who:

- are living outside of Fiji or who will be outside of Fiji on Election Day; or
- have a serious illness or other infirmity which means that they cannot travel from their home to their designated polling stations; or
- are in prison, including pre-trial detention; or
- cannot attend a polling station because of their religious beliefs or membership of a religious order; or
- would be away from where they usually live due to work commitments on Election Day and their workplace is not a place that is convenient for them to travel to their designated polling station.

Election Day

Most Fijian voters cast their ballots on Election Day. All those voters who were not registered for pre-polling and those who did not apply for postal voting, need to vote at their designated polling stations on Election Day. Election Day voting takes place in polling stations with stationary polling teams, which open the station at 07:30 and close them at 18:00, and then immediately commence counting the votes in each station.

Counting and tabulation of votes

Counting of Election Day votes is done at the polling station in the presence of observers and polling agents. Pre-poll and postal votes are counted in the National Count Center in Suva at the close of polls on Election Day. Aggregation and tabulation of results is done centrally at the National Results Tally Center in Suva.

Detailed observational data pertaining to Fiji's voting modalities can be found in section X. *Pre-polling, postal voting, and Election Day voting* and section XIII. *Observer Data*.

Parties and candidates

The total number of parties and candidates contesting the 2022 General Election was higher than in both 2014 and 2018. In 2018, there were 235 candidates from six parties and no independent candidates contesting 51 seats. Subsequently in the election cycle, one of the parties was deregistered. In 2022 there were nine parties, four of which were newly registered, and 343 candidates, including two independents, contesting 55 seats.

Of the 343 candidates contesting the 2022 General Election, 56 were women. This is the same number of women who contested the 2018 General Election. Due to the rise in candidate numbers, in 2022 women made up 16.3 percent of candidates, compared with 24 percent in 2018 and 17.7 percent in 2014.

Observations

The MOG notes with concern this proportional reduction in women's participation as candidates when compared to the 2014 and 2018 General Elections and the proportion of woman candidates who entered parliament following the 2022 General Election. The MOG recognises that a system of government that reflects the diversity of the community, including gender diversity, is a key pillar of democracy (see further, 'Women's Participation 'below).

The MOG observed that political parties and candidates were able to utilise designated public spaces to campaign and there were no observed barriers to access through existing permit systems.

Many non-government stakeholders reported their concerns regarding an increased restriction on some previously available formats of election-related activities and discourse, such as opinion polling and surveys, research workshops, candidate-development activities, and publishing of private opinion articles. Those stakeholders generally suspected that the incumbent government was behind these increased restrictions as it perceived many such activities as being within the purview of opposition parties.

Recommendation 1

The MOG recognises that there is no single solution that will quickly increase diversity in Parliament. We do however make the inference that increasing avenues for participation by non-government stakeholders in the electoral system is a part of the solution. The MOG recommends that reviewing restrictions on election related activities for civil society organisations (CSOs), particularly in relation to candidate-development activities, which will result in wider participation in the electoral system by all sectors of society, including women.

Voters and Voters Turnout

In total, there were 693,915 registered voters, including 606,092 voters were registered to vote on Election Day (87.3), 77,907 (11.2 percent) for pre-poll and 9,916 voters applied for Postal voting. (1.4 percent). This was the highest number of voters registered to vote in a general election in Fiji's history. This was an increase of 56,388 voters (8.8 percent increase) from the 2018, when 637,527 people were registered to vote.

The turnout for the 2022 General Election was 473,910 out of 693,915 registered voters making up 68.3 percent. Of those registered to vote on Election Day, 412,174 (67.9 percent) voted. 54,207 registered pre-poll (69.5 percent) turned out to vote. A total of 9,180 postal votes were admitted to the Count. The total number of invalid votes was 3326 out of the 473,910 (0.70 percent)

As for women's participation, in 2022, there were 345,567 (49.8 percent) women registered to vote, compared to 316,431 (49.63 percent) in 2018. At the time of the publishing of this report, gender-desegregated voter data has not been published by the FEO.

There were no significant weather events or other impediments to pre-poll voting reported during the 2022 General Election.

Observations

Fiji's voter turnout for the 2022 Election is comparable with other democracies in the Pacific⁴.

While pre-polling voter turnout in 2022 (69.5 percent) was up when compared to 2018 (64.78 percent), overall, voter turnout in 2022 (68.3 percent) was lower than the overall voter turnout in 2018 (71.9 percent).

While we do not yet have gender-desegregated voter turnout data, the 2022 General Election recorded the largest number of women voters registered in Fiji to date (49.8 percent).

National Voter Register

Complete, accurate and up-to-date voter registers are critical to ensure universal suffrage and allow orderly voting. As with the rest of the electoral operations, constitutional responsibility for voter registration and the establishment of a national voter register and polling station specific voter lists, falls within the EC's mandate⁵, but this responsibility belongs in practice to the FEO to implement.

Voter registration for the 2022 General Election closed on 31 October 2022 at 18:00, as specified in the Writ⁶. As previously noted, the 2022 General Election had the highest number of voters registered to vote in a general election in Fiji's history. The FEO has continued to maintain the voter register to a high standard. This includes a range of initiatives and awareness campaigns that support Fijians to update their personal information efficiently and effectively. To bolster the integrity of the voter register, during an election year the FEO cleanses the data against the birth, deaths and marriages register monthly to mitigate the chance of deceased voters being included. This is done biannually and outside of the election year.

The *2012 Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act* stipulates that all Fijian citizens 18 years or older, including those overseas, can register to vote, however neither registration nor voting are compulsory. Once registered, the voter receives a voter card that should be presented at the polling station (although other forms of photo ID are also valid for voting purposes and voting is even allowed without ID if the name of the voter is included in the polling station's voter list, see below).

⁴ Fiji's voter turnout ranks 9 out of 15 democracies in Oceania: <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/continent-view/Oceania/40>.

⁵ *Electoral Act*, s 3(1)(a).

⁶ *Electoral Act*, s 19; Writ for Election, published in Government of Fiji Gazette, Vol. 23, No 129 (31 October 2022).

Registration is not compulsory. The Act also called for a new electronic voter register, including biometric information (thumbprints and a facial photograph), which was introduced ahead of the 2014 election. That biometric register was used again in 2018 and once more in 2022. Registration of voters ends on the day an election writ is issued.

The FEO manages the register. The register is broken down into voter lists for each polling station, according to the voters' recorded residence information. Voting is only possible at assigned polling stations; this is common practice around the world, as having voters assigned to a particular polling station not only prevents multiple voting, but it is also an efficient planning tool to allow the electoral authorities to have an organised and cost-efficient process.

Ahead of the 2018 elections, continuous voter registration was introduced, and the practice was maintained in the lead-up to the 2022 general elections. Registration of Fijian voters overseas is organised by 'overseas' visits in a number of countries. Before registration stopped for the purposes of the 2022 General Election, any registered voter was able to make an objection against the registration of any other person in the National Register of Voters on the grounds set out in legislation.

Observations

The MOG assesses that the voter register continues to maintain a high standard of quality. The FEO has conducted continuous update activities and allowed Fijian voters to update their voter information details and has made various efforts to ensure the integrity of the register, including regular 'cleansing'. The MOG assesses the FEO methodology for updating the voter register to be robust and appreciates its efforts to have complete ownership of the biometric technology used for the register.

The MOG understands that the EC had published expressions of interest both locally and internationally, inviting tenders to audit the National Register of Voters in 2021 and August 2022. There were, however, no suitable service-providers found on both occasions. The MOG has been advised that the EC is still pursuing the audit of the National Register of Voters as a priority and is intending to publish an expression of interest for audit of the National Register of Voters following the 2022 General Election.

Recommendation 2

In order to maintain its accuracy and the public's confidence, the MOG recommends the EC to continue its efforts to conduct an external audit of the National Voter Register.

Voter Lists

An essential element in the voter registration process is the allocation of voters to their designated polling stations, which is done on the basis of the voters' residential address, as recorded in the

National Register of Voters. The voters list for each polling station contains the names of voters, their photos, their voter number and their assigned polling stations.

Voters are not allowed to vote if their name is not on the voter list of the assigned polling station. Provisional voter lists are made available for inspection by voters at Voter Information Centres across Fiji. For this electoral process, provisional voter lists were displayed from 5 November until 14 December 2022. Voters could also check their registration details on the FEO website, or via a free text message system.

Voter Cards

Voter registration for the 2022 general elections ended on 31 October 2022 (day of the writ issuance) at 18:00. The old voter card (coloured green) was 'expired' in benefit of an upgraded blue card, which has the voter's assigned polling venue. Although the old card could still be used to vote in 2022, the FEO actively encouraged voters to upgrade their voter cards and use the new blue ones.

Following a recommendation in the 2018 MOG report⁷, the EC recommended following the 2018 elections that the Voter Card be further enhanced to include the polling venue details of the voter. It was felt that the inclusion of this essential data onto the Voter Card would facilitate the search for the voter's polling venue. In that context, for the 2022 elections, the previous green voter card was upgraded to a blue voting card, which now includes each voter's polling venue details.

Observations

Some stakeholders noted to MOG that there was confusion as to the ID requirements to be able to vote. The MOG understands that over 90 percent of voters changed over to the new voter card. However, the card is not strictly required to vote; a point that was not well understood or communicated, particularly in the lead up to pre-polling. According to MOG observations at polling venues, voters with the old card were allowed to vote, and as per regulations, even voters without a card, but whose names and details (including photos) were on the voter list, and if appropriate identification was made by the Presiding Officer, were also allowed to vote.

Recommendation 3

The MOG recommends the FEO provide early clarification on the validity of older voter cards or other allowable identity documents ahead of the next General Election to avoid any registered voters from being discouraged from turning out to vote.

⁷ 2018 Fijian General Election, Final Report of the Multinational Observer Group, page 41.

Overseas Voters

Overseas voters make up 1 percent of the voter roll with 9,427 voters. Of these, 869 voters registered overseas applied for postal voting. The FEO set up a special polling station in Suva for voters who were registered overseas, and did not apply for a postal ballot, but who were in Suva on Election Day to cast their vote. In practical terms, this meant that there was a need to include 8,558 registered voters overseas, who did not apply for postal voting, to the voter register of the Central division. These voters were included in a 'super voter list' for the St. Stephen's polling station. On Election Day, 79 votes were cast at this station.

IV. Legal Framework

Constitutional Basis for Elections

The Constitution establishes the legal framework for the conduct of Fiji's elections, including regular elections based on universal adult (18 years) and non-discriminatory suffrage, and secret ballot.⁸ Members of Parliament are elected on a proportional basis in a single national constituency.⁹ In these respects, the Constitution provides a good basis for a general election that complies with fundamental international standards. The Constitution also establishes the EC¹⁰ and the SoE,¹¹ and sets out some of their tasks and responsibilities.

Chapter 2 of the Constitution, the 'Bill of Rights', provides Fijians with a series of civil, political, economic and social rights, which includes the right to vote by secret ballot,¹² the right to free, fair and regular elections,¹³ and the freedom of speech, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information, knowledge and ideas, as well as the freedom of the press.¹⁴ A number of these rights are also set out in international human rights treaties to which Fiji is party, including the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR), the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW), and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD).

Electoral Law

Three key acts comprise Fiji's electoral framework: the *Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act 2012*, the *Electoral Act 2014* and the *Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013*. These acts provide for the registration of voters¹⁵, the powers and responsibilities of

⁸ Constitution, section 52.

⁹ Constitution, section 53(1).

¹⁰ Constitution, section 75; noting that the Electoral Commission was originally established under the State Services Decree 2009. In the Constitution, it continues in existence.

¹¹ Constitution, section 76.

¹² Constitution, section 23(3)(a).

¹³ Constitution, section 23(2).

¹⁴ Constitution, section 17.

¹⁵ *Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act 2012*, part 2.

the EC¹⁶ and the SoE¹⁷, rules for the registration of political parties¹⁸ and candidate nominations¹⁹, the conduct of elections²⁰, electoral offences²¹, and the framework for petitioning disputed seats²².

Observations

The MOG observes that Fiji's electoral laws are complex and highly prescriptive, including provisions that many other common law nations would often include in subsidiary legislation, such as regulations. The MOG also observes that the maximum penalties for electoral and media offences are very high, especially noting the non-violent nature of the crimes.

Recommendation 4 (Aspirational)

While the MOG understands the need to deter persons from engaging in electoral offences, the MOG suggests that the EC and FEO consider whether the desire to deter such conduct is having an overly punitive effect, such that the FEO and SOE are considered politically partisan, which ultimately diminishes public confidence in the EC and FEO.

Recommendation 5 (Aspirational)

Consistent with recommendations in 2018, the MOG also recommends relevant Fijian institutions work towards consolidating and simplifying electoral legislation, in order to improve the public's readability and understanding of the legal framework regarding elections. This may include amending the *Electoral Act 2014* to include the principles that underpin Fiji's electoral framework, and have subsidiary legislation that sets out more detailed matters that are current included in the principal act.

Amendments to the electoral legislation

Since the 2018 General Election, there have been numerous amendments to legislation that governs the electoral framework. A number of these changes are positive: for example, section 57 seeks to support persons with a disability to vote²³. The MOG observed that such amendments have been implemented in practice and commends the FEO and polling station workers for supporting persons with disability, including older persons and those with mobility issues, to vote.

However, a number of legislative amendments were reported to the MOG as significant and as raising concern amongst the public, civil society, the media and non-incumbent political parties.

¹⁶ *Electoral Act 2014*, s 3.

¹⁷ *Electoral Act 2014*, s 6.

¹⁸ *Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013*, s 3.

¹⁹ *Electoral Act 2014*, ss 23-27.

²⁰ *Electoral Act 2014*, Part 3.

²¹ *Electoral Act 2014*, Part 6.

²² *Electoral Act 2014*, Part 5.

²³ In addition to being a positive policy outcome, this is in line with Fiji's obligations under the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability*, art 12.

Name requirements

In September 2021, the *Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act 2012*, was amended to require persons registering to vote to use the name as specified in their birth certificate²⁴.

Observations

This amendment has created controversy,²⁵ and was raised as a concern to the MOG by various civil society sectors as well as general members of the general public. It was reported to the MOG that there was minimal consultation ahead of the introduction of this Bill, and that the Bill was passed under Standing Order 51, which enables the Fijian Parliament to consider a Bill without delay. This includes allowing bills to be moved without notice, and without referral to a Parliamentary Committee such that no public consultation is required.

The MOG is aware that this amendment is the subject of legal challenge at the time of writing, and therefore further comment on the legislative amendment would not be appropriate.

Restrictions on opinion polling, research and surveys

Section 110A of the *Electoral Act 2014*, introduced to Parliament in August 2022, requires persons that publish opinion polls, surveys or research on elections to comply with guidelines adopted by the EC that it deems fit for the orderly conduct of free and fair elections. Section 110A also requires the SoE to direct a person to remove information published under the section if the SoE has reason to believe there is any inconsistency between the adopted guidelines and publication of the opinion poll, survey or research. Failure to comply carries a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment, a fine of \$10,000, or both.

Section 144A of the *Electoral Act 2014* prohibits a person or a political party from publishing 'a false statement which is likely to influence the outcome of an election or diminish public confidence in the performance of any duty or function' of the SoE or EC. Although not apparent on the face of the legislation, by operation of s 144A(2) and (3), the issue of whether a statement is false is decided by the SoE; a decision which can only be reviewed by the EC. Contravention of s 144A carries a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment, a fine of \$50,000 or both.

Observations

The MOG observes that sections 110A and 144A of the *Electoral Act 2014* raised considerable concerns from a broad range of civil society actors. Non-government organisations, universities and media organisations, all reported that s 110A and the guidance adopted by the EC, was the reason for not publishing opinion polls, surveys and research in relation to elections. These

²⁴ This amendment reflected amendments made to the *Interpretation Act 2012* and the *Birth, Deaths, Marriages Act*.

²⁵ See press release in relation to the constitutional challenge here: <https://www.fwrn.org.fj/news/media-releases/67-all-category/news/press-releases/640-fwrn-fwcc-joint-press-release-women-challenge-gender-discriminatory-name-change-laws-30-12-2022>.

stakeholders reported that although the guidelines were publicly available on the EC's website²⁶, these were too onerous, and the penalties for failing to comply were significant.

Media organisations seemed to be main sectors affected by the s 144A amendment during the 2022 Election. The MOG observes with concern that the non-governmental organisations, universities and media organisations perceived the legislative amendments as seeking to restrain their participation in the electoral environment²⁷, rather than as an effort to improve the standards of opinion polling, research and surveys on election-related matters in Fiji, or to manage misinformation. In order to ensure public confidence in such an amendment, the MOG notes that the amendment may have been better received with greater consultation regarding the amendment, and efforts to strengthen capacity amongst the community to comply with standards adopted by the EC.

The MOG recognises that public opinion polling plays an important role in assisting the public understand election results. They can also be helpful to reducing any public information gaps that might arise between popular expectations and actual outcomes in elections, therefore strengthening the credibility of elections.

Changes to powers of the SoE

Since 2018, the SoE's powers have been expanded, particularly in subsections 6(1A)-(1C) of the *Electoral Act 2014*. These amendments enable the SoE to direct any person to furnish information that the SoE considers relevant for the performance of their functions, notwithstanding the provisions of any other 'written law' on confidentiality, privilege or secrecy. Failure to comply with this direction carries a maximum penalty of 5 years' imprisonment or a fine of \$50,000 for a natural person and \$500,000 for a company, non-government organisation, government department, or other entity.

Observations

Many civil society actors and members of the media told the MOG that the powers of the SoE are excessive and stifle political debate and reporting. The MOG understands that the subsection 6(1A) - (1C) amendment was passed under standing order 51 (see explanation above)²⁸.

²⁶ See <https://www.electoralcommission.org.fj/2022/08/31/the-electoral-commission-finds-that-the-fiji-sun-breaches-the-opinion-poll-guidelines/>.

²⁷ In this regard, the MOG notes the observations and recommendations of the 2018 MOG in relation to s 115 of the *Electoral Act 2014*.

²⁸ See Parliament of the Republic of Fiji, *Daily Hansard*, Monday 29 August 2022 p. 2066, available at: <https://www.parliament.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Daily-Hansard-Monday-29th-August-2022.pdf>. This is contrast to the *Electoral Registration of Voters Amendment Bill*, the debate of which was subject to a one-hour time limit.

Recommendation 6

The MOG recommends reviewing the appropriateness of the SoE's powers, particularly in subsections 6(1A) - (1C) of the *Electoral Act 2014* to ensure they are not excessive and do not have a detrimental real or perceived impact on free political debate.

Observations

Civil society actors expressed concerns that *Electoral Act 2014* amendments passed under Standing Order 51 limited their ability to be involved in shaping the democratic process in Fiji. In their view, the amendments giving the SoE powers to require information to be furnished are too broad. The MOG understands that the purpose of the amendments was to enable the SoE to perform his functions under the *Electoral Act*. Greater consultation, including through parliamentary committee processes, would have given civil society the opportunity to raise their concerns, and give the Government the opportunity to explain the goals of the amendment, and together ensure the legislation is drafted in a manner that is well-tailored to the desired purpose.

Recommendation 7 (Aspirational)

The MOG recommends that all relevant Fijian institutions ensure best efforts are undertaken to use full parliamentary consultation processes when amending electoral legislation, including providing advice to relevant decision-makers regarding the appropriateness of using Standing Order 51 when passing amendments to electoral legislation. Noting recommendation 4 above, the MOG notes that Fiji's institutions should seek to ensure that amendments to the electoral framework that can have significant effects on voters should go through consultation processes, as appropriate.

Introduction of costings requirement

Section 116(4C) introduced a requirement for political parties to provide information on how financial commitments made as part of the campaign would be costed. Such information has to be provided in writing and must include information on how revenue is to be raised, as well as how expenditure is to be allocated to sectors or agencies. Failure to provide this information amounted to an offence under the *Electoral Act*, carrying a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment or a fine of \$50,000.

The MOG understands that this new requirement was introduced to improve the integrity of political campaigning during general elections and give the Fijian people greater access to valuable information. However, political parties expressed concerns that non-incumbent parties did not have the capacity to comply with the costing requirements (see further, 'Political Parties' below). Some media stakeholders also raised concerns with their ability to report on the campaign promises of non-incumbent parties, where those promises had not complied with the costing requirement.

V. Electoral Authorities

The legal framework establishes an independent electoral management body headed by an oversight and policy-making body²⁹, the EC, and an executive and operational arm, the FEO, headed by the SoE³⁰.

Electoral Management Body Structure

The Fijian legal framework establishes an ‘independent’ electoral management body model (EMB) with an oversight body, the EC, and an executive body, the FEO. The EC is responsible for the registration of voters and the preparation and conduct of the elections, but it completely relies in the FEO to operationally implement its mandate. According to the legal provisions, the EC is to have six EC Members as well as a chairman; in 2022, the EC had only six Members in total, as a seat was empty due to the resignation of one of its members due to health reasons. The six EC Members had a broad geographical and professional representation, and four of the Members were women.

Additional to the EMB, the Fijian institutions that also deal with electoral matters include the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption (FICAC), which handles criminal offences of electoral nature. The Attorney General is also the Minister responsible for Elections, with a limited mandate, serving mostly as a conduit for electoral matters to Parliament, to invite domestic observers and to approve international observers, and to issue regulations under the *Electoral Act 2014* (which has not happened since the Act was enacted).

The Fijian Elections Office and the Supervisor of Elections

The Office of the Supervisor of Elections (SoE), most commonly referred to as the Fijian Elections Office (FEO), acts under the direction of the EC. As such, the FEO is the executive arm of the EC. The FEO is mandated to conduct, in the name of the EC, all the technical and operational preparations and tasks to ensure credible elections. In that capacity, the FEO performs the day-to-day tasks required to conduct national elections.

The FEO became a permanent body in 2014. It is headed by the SoE, who is also the secretary of the EC and the political parties’ registrar. The SOE reports and is accountable to the EC. The FEO is an independent office, with its own organisational structure, key positions and authorities approved by the SoE.

The FEO is established as an independent office that must be ‘properly staffed and equipped to perform its duties and functions’ and has a separate budget under the *Electoral Act 2014*; the head of the FEO, the SoE, is not subject to the direction or control of any person, apart from the EC directions and the decisions of the Court.

²⁹ *Electoral Act 2014*, s 3.

³⁰ *Electoral Act 2014*, s 6.

The SoE has practical responsibility for the administration of elections, both across the electoral cycle and the electoral events. The SoE's powers and duties are enumerated in the *Electoral Act 2014*, and include administering political party, voter, and candidate registration; implementing voter education; conducting Parliamentary elections (including voting, counting and tabulation) and overseeing compliance with campaign rules.

The SoE, and all electoral officers employed by the FEO, are required to conduct their duties and functions, and exercise their powers, impartially; and are prohibited from undertaking any political or campaign activities during their tenure. The FEO is also required to conduct all activities in a transparent manner. The SoE and FEO officials are immune from civil or criminal liability in respect of acts or omissions done in the exercise of their powers or duties.

The FEO is based in Suva, with four divisional offices. Additionally, for the electoral period, the FEO established 23 'areas' and 101 'hubs' (each hub is responsible for the management of up to 40 polling stations). The SoE has sole authority to appoint and remove employees to the FEO. All FEO staff must either be Fijian citizens or have Ministerial approval for their employment. There are 46 'permanent' (or 'long-term') staff employed under five-year contracts; but over 800 employees are recruited on shorter three-year contracts prior to elections.

Observations

The EMB model adopted by Fiji aligns with international standards and is of common use in many parts of the world, particularly where an 'independent' electoral authority is established.

The MOG had unrestricted access to the FEO and its operations, including briefings on processes and procedures and weekly meetings with FEO staff and the SoE where MOG staff were free to ask questions. Observers were also present during all critical stages of the electoral process, commencing with the issuance of the Writ on 31 October 2022³¹. Electoral processes covered included candidate registration, nomination, and lodging of appeals, polling day worker trainings, printing, storage and distribution of sensitive materials, Pre-polling and Election Day activities across the four divisions. Also, close observation of the vote count at polling station level, tallying and tabulation of votes at the Counting and Tally Centres in Suva, was completed during the period of the mission. The MOG also received detailed briefing and demonstrations of the information technology (IT) solutions used to support the electoral process.

The MOG examined the FEO's processes and procedures put in place to support the running of the General Election in 2022. The MOG observed that they were robust and had adequate checks and balances to ensure that any irregularities would be detected and mitigated. The MOG also observed the FEO to be open and transparent in its engagements with the MOG which noted a depth of professionalism within the FEO structure, with an emphasis on the empowerment of election officers and staff, including women.

³¹ Writ for Election, published in Government of Fiji Gazette, Vol. 23, No.129 (31 October 2022).

In 2017, amendments to the *Electoral Act 2014*, which made the SoE Secretary to the EC³², were designed to create greater coordination between the two main entities of Fiji's electoral management body. This model aligns with international standards, and the coordination between the EC and FEO has been commended³³.

Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption

In addition to the electoral management body, the FICAC plays a significant role in supporting the integrity of Fiji's electoral framework. Noting that the *Electoral Act 2014* creates several electoral offences, FICAC is set to investigate and prosecute 'any offence of corrupt or illegal conduct pertaining to any election'³⁴.

The MOG observed that during the 2022 campaign period, FICAC received 60 complaints, seven cases were taken to court and closed, and 46 cases are still under investigation³⁵. Overall, the MOG observed FICAC to be a professional institution that sought to conduct its functions in the public interest.

Recommendation 8

The MOG recommends the EC develop and publicise procedures to ensure due process in considering complaints against the SoE, political parties and the FEO in line with s 17 of the *Electoral Act 2014*. It should publish responses to all substantive issues that stakeholders raise with it.

VI. Political Parties

Fiji's Electoral Act grants the EC responsibility for formulating policy and overseeing the election in relation to the registration of political parties. The SoE has responsibility to administer party registration in accordance with the *Political Parties Act 2013*, under which the SoE is also the Registrar of Political Parties.

Fiji currently has nine registered political parties, all of which contested the 2022 General Election. They are: All Peoples Party; FijiFirst (FFP); Fiji Labour Party (FLP); FijiFirst Party (FFP); National Federation Party (NFP); New Generation Party; The People's Alliance (PAP); Social Democratic Liberal Party (SODELPA); Unity Fiji and the We Unite Fiji Party. Two independent candidates, Rajendra Sharma and Ravinesh Reddy, ran in the 2022 general election.

³² Electoral Act 2014 s 5(7).

³³ See 2018 Final Report of the Multinational Observer Group, p.14.

³⁴ Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 2007, s 2A(c).

³⁵ See for example: <https://www.fijitimes.com/2022-bgeneral-election-elections-office-refers-duo-to-ficac/>; <https://www.feo.org.fj/national-federation-party-referred-to-ficac/>; <https://www.fijitimes.com/flp-refer-fijifirst-toficac-for-breach-of-electoral-act/>; <https://www.fijitimes.com/2022-general-election-fijifirst-party-candidate-oconnorfronts-court>.

Candidate Nomination

The Electoral Act sets out procedures for the nomination of both independent and party candidates. In this election, the FEO initially received applications from 356 candidates representing nine registered political parties and two independent candidates. The FEO rejected 11 applications and two were withdrawn. 10 applicants appealed. The EC dismissed nine of these appeals and one was allowed.

The Parties submitted an additional three applicants, with the result that 343 candidates contested the election.

The Act also allows registered voters to object to any candidate on the grounds that the candidate is not qualified to be nominated or the nomination does not comply with the Constitution or Electoral Act. The EC received two such objections and upheld none.

Party Membership

The MOG recognises that the public service must be, and be seen to be, apolitical, and that public servants must undertake their duties in a way that serves the collective rather than a partisan interest. Legal provisions supporting this principle are common internationally. Thus, many countries disbar public or civil servants standing for election, while some disbar certain categories of senior public office holders joining political parties. The MOG further notes – and international practice generally recognises – qualitative differences between party membership, holding office in a party and standing as a candidate for election.

The MOG understands that in practice the focus of Fijian electoral authorities has been on ensuring public officers do not assume office-holding positions in political parties in ways that might present a conflict of interest. The MOG also notes that perceived political allegiance or alignment by some CSOs has limited the FEO's willingness to engage with some organisations during the election process.

Observations

The MOG commends the intention of the *Political Parties Act 2013* to implement strong governance standards for political parties and candidates. Fiji's requirements in this regard align with international good practice. The requirements for public disclosure of party and candidate assets and liabilities, as well as the ban on corporations and foreign entities funding parties and candidates, also support Fiji's obligations under the UN Convention Against Corruption. Similarly, Fiji's cap of \$FJ10,000 each year for donations by an individual to a political party – and the requirement for parties to make donors' names public – align with good international practice

VII. The Pre-Election Environment

The MOG observed that political parties and candidates were able to utilise designated physical public spaces to campaign. More broadly, however, a range of non-government stakeholders expressed concerns that the legal framework, including recent amendments, had contributed to a shrinking of ‘public space’, restricting free and open debate on political and election related matters³⁶.

The MOG notes that in addition to the introduction of ss 110A and 144A (see explanation above, under ‘*Legal Framework*’), s 115 was reported as a continued concern for civil society, including universities that would otherwise engage in voter information and awareness. Section 115 governs the role of civil society in elections, prohibiting once the election date has been announced, any foreign-funded CSO from engaging in any ‘campaign’ (as defined in s 115(1) to include organising debates, public forums, meetings, interviews, panel discussions or publishing material), and requiring the EC or SoE to approve any activity that is otherwise legally assigned to the EC or the SoE throughout the electoral cycle (including voter information and education).

The MOG notes that in 2018, a review of s 115 was recommended, including ‘whether or not this provision is the most appropriate mechanism to manage relations of civil society organisations within the electoral space’³⁷. In response, the EC reviewed the appropriateness of this section. The EC came to the view that this section needed to be maintained as it ensures compliance, accuracy and consistency of voter awareness and education programs organised or published by CSOs after the announcement of election date. CSO Guidelines and Forms for the 2022 General Election were approved by the EC on 25 April 2022.

Recommendation 9 (aspirational)

Given the concerns that have again been raised by CSO stakeholders, however noting the justifiable role of an election-management body in preventing undue foreign influence in a nation’s civic education, the MOG recommends that a review of subsections 115(2) and (3) in particular may be prudent, especially when its effect is considered cumulatively with the newly inserted ss 110A and 144A of the *Electoral Act 2014*.

Electoral Preparations

Immediately following the 2018 general elections, the FEO began preparing for the 2022 process. During those four years, besides undertaking a thorough process of capacity consolidation of the institution and its staff which started following the 2014 elections, the FEO introduced a robust planning strategy which ensured the efficiency and appropriateness of its preparations.

³⁶ In particular, *Electoral Act 2014*, s 115, which was in the Act in 2018 also, as well as ss 110A and 144A, which are recent amendments.

³⁷ Final Report of the Multinational Observer Group 2018, p. 28.

Operational planning was preceded by the development of a four-year strategic plan for 2020 to 2023, from which annual operational plans followed. Such strategic vision was correctly considered to be an effective way to equip the FEO to further plan and implement the necessary operations for the 2022 general elections.

Observations

This operational planning process allowed the FEO to better prepare its operational responsibilities in a timely manner and to advance electoral preparations starting in 2021 and intensifying from the beginning of 2022, even without a clear polling date.

Timing of the 2022 elections

The electoral system in Fiji does not provide for a fixed date for the conduct of the general elections. As is usual in Commonwealth countries, the dates for close of nominations and the polling day are set through electoral writs. Once the elections have been conducted, each writ is then returned to whoever issued it, with the name of the elected candidate(s) annotated thereon. The writ is a formal document from the sovereign, Governor-General, President or equivalent, commanding the returning officer(s) to conduct an election. In the case of Fiji, the electoral writ is issued by the President to the Chairman of the EC and, because general elections are conducted in a single constituency (the country), there is only one writ issued. For the 2022 General Election, the earlier possible date to issue the writ was 26 May and the latest one before the end of November. Generally, the writ is issued on a Monday and from then, the electoral authorities have 44 days to prepare the election.

Against expectations, the writ was only issued on 31 October, which set the polling date for 14 December (the end of the parliamentary term was 26 November, which signalled the last possible date for issuing the writ). As a result, the Parliament was dissolved on 31 October, at the issuing of the writ.

The electoral campaign was declared from 26 April, a month before the earliest date for issuing the writ. Commentators have argued that the polling date was set too close to Christmas, which created concerns that many voters would be travelling and would not be able to vote at their designated polling stations, as well as concerns about the cyclone season. The delays in issuing the writ created some level of uneasiness and uncertainty with some electoral stakeholders and generated speculations, among others, the idea that these are 'delaying tactics' from the government and that the polling date had become a 'political tool'.

Observations

The MOG's assessment is that, although this created some uncertainties in regards to the operational preparations, the late issuance of the writ did not affect excessively the implementation of the detailed FEO operational planning.

Operational Planning

As it has done in the past, and in order to organise preparations following the operational plan, the FEO established a number of flow-charts highlighting the various tasks required and their timeframe, which became the main tools in ensuring that all different tasks were completed in a timely manner. As part of the development of procedures, the FEO also focused on the design, procurement and packing of electoral materials, both sensitive and non-sensitive, including design and printing of ballot papers.

The MOG noted that the FEO advanced the packing of non-sensitive material and finalised it before the writ was issued. Additional FEO preparations for polling focused on reviewing operational procedures, recruiting temporary polling staff as well as preparing and implementing operational training programs. The FEO also liaised with the police and other pertinent agencies for the necessary security arrangements. It is worth noting that throughout its operational preparations, the FEO strengthened its internal 'quality assurance' team in order to monitor its different activities and to correct any errors that might be encountered.

The MOG notes that the FEO continued strengthening the 'electoral management system' (EMS) and further consolidated local ownership of the technology used for the electoral management operation. These tools included the biometric voter register and the mobile phone applications for presiding officers the *My Polling Assistant App*, as well as a mobile phone application for publishing provisional results, the *FEO Results App*. Also, the Results Management and Information System (RMIS) was streamlined to consolidate results at the National Results Tally Centre.

Observations

The FEO made significant efforts to enhance transparency of its operations, with a solid public outreach strategy, including almost daily press briefings and periodic briefings with political parties, as well as media events at the launching of all key electoral preparation activities. Complementing the FEO public outreach, voter information activities and awareness activities that started months before the issuance of the writ. The SoE acted almost exclusively as the FEO's management interface with the media, giving him an unusually high public profile compared to his counterparts in other countries.

Production, packing and transport of electoral materials

Following the development of operational procedures, the FEO launched the design and production of necessary electoral material, based on (and often improving on) the 2018 experience. Non-sensitive materials were pre-packed and sent to the area offices in June 2022. Once the writ was issued, the production and packing process of sensitive materials was launched.

The FEO decided to use once more, translucent plastic ballot boxes, which again served also as the main way of transporting and retrieving sensitive materials. FEO also chose to continue the

use of cardboard polling screens, which had functioned well before given their lightweight, practical nature and efficiency in giving voters enough privacy. The numbered tamper evident seals, which play a crucial role in securing the ballot boxes and ensuring the integrity of sensitive materials throughout the process, once again featured prominently in 2022.

Ballot papers, with a number of security features to prevent duplication, were printed in-country under heavy security. There was high quality control in both the printing and collation stages, with strict procedures for securely destroying ballot paper discards. The ballot-printing process was very transparent, open to polling (political party) agents and observers. The MOG had an opportunity to observe the process for the general printing of ballots for postal voting, pre-polling and Election Day. The FEO printed a total of 20,000 postal ballot papers, 106,300 ballot papers for pre-poll and 668,850 ballots for Election Day. Ballot papers were bundled into booklets of 50, with the booklets identified by serial numbers. The exception were the ballot papers destined for postal voting, which were not collated into booklets as they were sent separately, and pre-folded, with the postal electoral package. As a late development and partly in response to MOG's inquiry, the FEO decided to add a bar-code to ballot papers books, to enable better track of them and to circulate the information to all political parties of which ballot paper booklets went to each polling station.

The FEO introduced serial numbers in the ballot paper booklets and according to the law, had serial numbers in the ballots 'counterfoils'; however, following international good practice, no serial numbers were printed in the ballot papers themselves. In the lead up to the election, sensitive materials such as ballot papers and seals were stored in secure facilities and under police guard. In expectation of a much greater number of candidates than in the past (given the greater number of registered parties and the greater number of seats in Parliament), the FEO estimated that it would become an added hurdle to pack the ballot papers inside the ballot boxes with the other sensitive materials, as had been done in the past. Therefore, the FEO packed and delivered the ballot papers in separate cardboard boxes, named as the 'ballot paper transportation containers'. However, because the increase in the number of candidates did not materialise, the ballot paper was not as big as expected, and following due tests, the FEO decided that in fact the ballot papers would fit into the ballot boxes, so the 'transportation containers' were not used, greatly facilitating the logistics and allowing for better control of handling of the sensitive materials, including ballot papers.

Packing of non-sensitive materials in polling kits and sensitive materials inside the ballot boxes took place at the FEO central warehouses, both for pre-polling and polling. MOG also was present during the packing process (as were polling agents), including the dispatch of postal voting materials and the checking of materials for pre-polling by the presiding officers, both at the central warehouse and different area offices. MOG was able to verify that the processes were highly efficient and transparent, under adequate security measures.

Observations

During its observations, the MOG found the FEO competent and that it completed the vast majority of technical and operational preparations on time, despite the challenges of Fiji's

geography and weather, and the unpredictable number of potential candidates impacting on the size of the ballot.

Identification of polling venues and polling stations

The FEO has the power to requisition the use of any public building for the purpose of the conduct of polling and any other election-related activities. Identification of polling venues started with a first assessment in March 2021, followed by later assessments in October 2021, February and April 2022 and a continuous assessment during May 2022. The list of polling venues was finalised in consultation with the political parties and was published in November of 2022. Eleven polling venues were changed on the eve of the election, Tuesday 13 December 2022, on grounds of *force majeure*.

Observations

Polling venues were well selected and well published ahead of the election. While last minute changes to polling venues and stations are undesirable, the MOG observed that the FEO publicised these changes well through a number of avenues, including the media, establishing a hotline and through the text number.

Recruitment of temporary staff and operational training

In order to conduct the electoral operations (including training, logistics, and staff for pre-polling, and counting and tabulation at the National Count Center), the FEO appointed over 7,500 temporary workers throughout the country. For the National Count Center, 200 presiding officers (POs), 200 Assistant Presiding officers (APOs) and 400 Polling Day Workers (PDWs) were hired and trained; for the Results Center, 300 staff were hired and trained on the use of the RMiS, used to aggregate official results.

While temporary polling officials were selected from recruitment centres across the country, the SoE retained sole authority to appoint these staff members, and the FEO highlighted that this process was done in a transparent manner. The selection process was merit-based, following a number of tests (literacy and numeracy), where selection of staff focused on high performing, honest employees with high standards of integrity. Those who scored highest in this process were recruited into positions with greater responsibilities (POs, and APOs). Temporary polling staff were required to be non-partisan and also underwent police checks. Recruiting polling staff from members of the public rather than drawing on the civil service to be PDWs was a deliberate attempt by the FEO to broaden engagement in the electoral process.

The FEO conducted extensive operational training to ensure the temporary staff were up to the tasks. The operational training program was organised at different levels and started in 2020, with a number of refresher courses, in particular in the period leading to the elections. Major pre-writ training included EOs training in January 2022, POs training in April 2022, as well as area officers training, hub leaders' workshops and trainings. The FEO also conducted training for police officers

on matters related to the electoral process. Post writ training included four sessions of training of trainers, as well as refresher trainings for POs and area officers.

The MOG along with FEO teams observed PO training across Fiji, as well as training of data entry clerks for the tabulation of results, and found these courses consistent, professionally delivered and effective. Training materials were well developed, comprehensive and very user-friendly, which greatly contributed to the success of the training. Trainers were found by MOG observers to be very competent overall, with very effective training techniques, which featured extensive role playing.

Security Environment

Under the Electoral Act, the Fiji Police Force (FPF) is obligated to provide ‘appropriate resources as required by the Supervisor to assist the FEO in the conduct of elections’³⁸. For its part, the FPF provided more than 2,000 officers to election operations for polling day (similar to 2018). The FEO also coordinated with the FPF to ensure the escort and safekeeping of sensitive materials.

The SoE made clear in public statements that the only security involved in the election would be the FPF and that there would be no private security firms involved. FEO coordinated with the FPF for security preparations for the election, including producing standard operating procedures for all stages of the electoral process. The FEO also facilitated training with the police.

The Republic of Fiji Military Force (RFMF) had no direct role in the election and interpreted their constitutional security mandate to mean that the RFMF could assist the FPF if required and/or requested – which was not necessary. The RFMF in the lead up to the election made a number of statements stating it would be apolitical throughout the election period and that its role was to support the legitimately elected government.

Fiji’s electoral legal framework does not provide a role for the RFMF, although the Constitution sets out that it has ‘overall responsibility’ to ensure ‘the security, defence and well-being of Fiji and all Fijians’³⁹.

Observations

The MOG discussed electoral preparations with the leadership of the FPF and found that it had a good understanding of its role. The MOG observed the provision of security by the FPF for voting at polling stations and also escorting and securing sensitive materials, including ballot boxes and non-sensitive materials. The MOG assessed that the FPF provided adequate resources to carry out their electoral tasks and that the police performed their role well, in an unobtrusive and respectful manner, helping to build confidence in the electoral process.

While the RFMF has no formal role in Fiji’s electoral processes, its public statement and posture are influential given the country’s recent history. Overall, the MOG observed that the RFMF did

³⁸ *Electoral Act 2014*, s 12(5).

³⁹ Constitution, section 131(2).

not interfere during the pre-election period or on Election Day. Prior to commencement of Pre-polling, the RFMF Commander Major General Jone Kalouniwai, stated that the RFMF would honour the democratic process by respecting the outcome of the votes.

On 22 December 2022, following the election and while the new Fijian government was being formed, the RFMF was mobilised at the request of the FPF to assist with law and order. Although the FPF had requested support from the RFMF to assist police in maintaining law and order, Fiji remained peaceful. Commander of the RFMF stated that the ‘the police were still in control and the military would respect whatever the outcome is’⁴⁰.

Use of Government Resources during the Campaign

A concern raised by a wide range of stakeholders from the 2018 General Election was a lack of laws, guidance or conventions regarding the conduct of Ministers, Members of Parliament and the civil service once Parliament is dissolved ahead of a general election. In 2022, many non-government stakeholders again raised this concern with the MOG as an ongoing key concern that directly impacts on public confidence in the electoral process. Many non-government stakeholders told the MOG that this gave any incumbent government an unfair political advantage in elections by allowing them to announce and implement government programs during the campaign period.

The 2018 MOG report recommended the Fijian Government introduce guidelines to foster a greater level of public confidence in the electoral process. In 2022, the MOG observed the modest amendments in 2021 to the *Electoral Act 2014* which prohibit the use of government vehicles to conduct campaign activities⁴¹.

Caretaker Arrangements

Caretaker arrangements⁴², be they laws, regulations or conventions, formalise the rights of the opposition as a potential future government, restrain the government from excessively exploiting the advantages of incumbency in an election and reinforce public confidence in a level electoral playing field. The MOG notes that the Electoral Act prohibits government officials and those entitled to government benefits from using government resources to their electoral advantage⁴³. We also note FICAC’s advice that no breaches of these standards were reported in the 2022 General Election. The MOG notes that following recommendations contained in the 2018 MOG report and since, Fiji passed the *Code of Conduct Act*⁴⁴. While this Act does not specifically refer to caretaker arrangements, it sets out codes of conduct for public servants, politicians and judges

⁴⁰ <https://www.fbcnews.com.fj/news/fijian-elections/military-only-in-supporting-role-rfmf/>.

⁴¹ See *Electoral Act 2014* s 113(4A).

⁴² The terminology ‘caretaker arrangements’ is used here due to Fiji’s historical connection with Westminster parliamentary systems.

⁴³ See *Electoral Act 2014*, s 113.

⁴⁴ <http://www.parliament.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Bill-No-33-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>.

and establishes a commission which must refer complaints to FICAC and penalties for breaches of the Act⁴⁵.

Nevertheless, the 2018 Joint Report by the EC and the SoE notes the 2018 MOG recommendation regarding caretaker conventions but does not offer its own legislative or policy recommendations⁴⁶.

Observations

The MOG observed a lack of laws, regulations or conventions common to other democracies necessary to guide the Government, Members of Parliament and the civil service on appropriate conduct during the electoral process.

The MOG also noted that throughout the campaign period Government Ministers undertook a range of high-profile activities, dispensing government grants and other funds and appointing 13 Permanent Secretaries to Government Ministries and Commissions on 18 November 2022.

We note that administering projects, dispensing grants, opening buildings and appointing government officials are the business of the government. Should the government continue these sorts of activities during an election campaign, it can impart an 'incumbency advantage' which could influence voters. Furthermore, making major policy decisions, new appointments or entering into major contracts or undertakings during an election campaign can also bind a potential future government's right to govern as they see fit. These activities should therefore not take place in the caretaker period, after an election has been called.

The Government of Fiji adopted a recommendation from the 2018 MOG report to clarify the start and finish of the campaign period so that stakeholders understand their rights and obligations during this time. The FEO announced that the campaign period would begin on 26 April 2022 and end 48 hours before Election Day⁴⁷. This announcement provided clarity to political parties and candidates as to when campaign rules under the *Electoral Act 2014* would come into effect but, with no fixed election date, this further obfuscates when a caretaker period could come into effect.

Recommendation 10 (Aspirational)

The MOG recommends Fiji considers and develops appropriate 'caretaker' guidance for the conduct of Ministers, Members of Parliament and the civil service in the lead-up to future elections. These guidelines could also define whether there are any distinctions between the campaign period, as it pertains to the *Electoral Act 2014*, and the period since a writ is issued and elections held (generally referred to as 'a caretaker period').

⁴⁵ Anyone found guilty under the Code of Conduct Act is liable to a fine of up to \$FJ10,000 or up to five years in jail.

⁴⁶ Final Report of the Multinational Observer Group 2018, p. 22.

⁴⁷ <https://www.electoralcommission.org.fj/2022/04/26/announcement-on-the-official-campaign-period/>.

Campaign Funding and Spending

Fiji has strict rules in place to ensure parties and candidates disclose funding sources irrespective of monetary value⁴⁸. This robust reporting requirement however does not account for campaign expenditure.

Observations

The MOG observed a significant difference between the regulations regarding campaign financing and regulations regarding campaign expenditure.

During engagement with stakeholders, the MOG heard a range of views of how campaign funding and spending impacted on the perceived fairness of the campaign.

Some political parties expressed the view that the long official campaign period and the lack of a fixed election date resulted in challenges planning election campaign expenditure. For example, advertising space could not be efficiently booked by opposition parties following the allocation of candidate numbers.

The MOG heard views from some political parties that the robust campaign expenditure reporting requirements are a barrier for low-value 'roti-parcel' fundraising efforts but that the Act's requirements could be navigated. Other parties thought that the blanket requirement was fair due to the lack of exemptions.

The requirement to publish sources of funding and the reporting or limits to campaign expenditure are separate issues. When compared to international practice, Fiji's fundraising reporting requirements are robust and impart a high degree of transparency. These fundraising reporting requirements are significantly stronger when compared to Fiji's campaign expenditure reporting requirements and limits, which do not exist under the *Electoral Act*. Internationally, some democracies legislate to require reporting funding and sources throughout the electoral cycle and campaign period while others require reporting to take place following the conclusion of the election.

The MOG notes that many countries balance the need to respect the freedom of political expression with the need to reduce the inherent advantage of parties of candidates who possess greater resources (often the incumbent).

⁴⁸ Section 25 of the *Political Parties Act 2013* is entitled 'Declaration of Assets, Liabilities and Expenditure in relation to elections' requires reporting 30 days in advance of (but not following) an election. Its title notwithstanding, its content contains no reference or instruction in relation to election expenditure. Section 26 sets out requirements for the auditing of party accounts but makes no reference to election expenditure.

Recommendation 11 (Aspirational)

The MOG recommends considering requirements for all political parties to report campaign expenditure and consider setting campaign expenditure limits.

Introduction of costing requirements for campaign manifestos and policies

The 2018 MOG reported that some stakeholders had suggested parties should be required to submit their campaign manifestos to audit so that voters could better understand the costs of any campaign promises against their benefits⁴⁹. The 2018 report noted that it is practice in some countries for parties to voluntarily submit campaign platforms for audit, often by a reputable accounting firm or non-partisan fiscal institution or to government agencies, such as a Ministry, Treasury, or a Parliamentary Budget Office.

The 2018 MOG was agnostic as to the usefulness of these audits and did not provide a specific recommendation regarding auditing for campaign manifestos.

Since 2018, changes to s 116 of the *Electoral Act 2014* were made (see further, '*Legal Framework*' above) that have created a requirement for political parties to publish the sources of funding proposed for policies and initiatives as part of the 2022 Election Campaign. The SoE enforced this requirement at least once during the campaign⁵⁰, stating that the law required sources of funding to be done 'immediately' following the announcement of a policy or initiative.

Observations

The MOG heard differing views from political parties regarding the requirement to cost policies and manifestos. Some political parties felt they possessed the technical capabilities within their party to cost their campaign manifestos, however, it was expressed to us that this requirement was causing delays in manifestos being published. It was also reported to the MOG that this requirement limited the ability of parties to develop certain policy platforms, such as longer-term policies that are particularly hard to cost.

The MOG heard views from some political parties that, without financial or technical support to conduct these sorts of audits, an incumbent government or a well-resourced opposition party would hold an unfair advantage regarding the development and advertising of policy positions during a campaign.

The MOG recognises that if manifestos are submitted sufficiently early in the campaign, these can help to inform voters. At the same time, given that economists differ significantly in their assessments of taxation and government expenditure, this process may be less helpful than intended in predicting the impact of a policy on the wider economy.

⁴⁹ Final Report of the Multinational Observer Group 2018, page 22.

⁵⁰ <https://www.feo.org.fj/SoE-enforces-section-116-in-the-campaign-rules/>.

Recommendation 12 (Aspirational)

The MOG recommends consideration of providing technical and/or financial support for the costing of political manifestos and policies of political parties. This recognises the benefit of voters better understanding costs and benefits of proposed policies. It also recognises the need to balance the capacity of all political parties and candidates to fulfil the legislative requirement.

VIII. Public outreach, Inclusiveness and Participation in the Electoral Process

FEO Public Outreach and Training Efforts

FEO produced detailed manuals and conducted training for the permanent and non-permanent polling workers at all levels from polling staff to POs, hub coordinators and district supervisors. Training sessions were conducted across the regions from 10 December 2021 to 8 December 2022. The FEO also conducted training for political parties and the media.

Observations

MOG assessment is that these training efforts reflected in the overall performance and credibility of the electoral administration.

Besides training its own polling staff, the FEO also produced a handbook for party agents ('polling agents'), which not only featured the polling agent's Code of Conduct but also explained how to become a polling agent and the role of polling agents in the process. The handbook also gave an overview of all electoral operations, to polling, counting, tabulation and declaration of results, as well as explaining the allocation of seats and the process for electoral complaints. The FEO complemented the handbook with facilitation of 'polling agents' training sessions.

Furthermore, the FEO developed a 'media handbook' to guide media's coverage of the electoral process, as well as a 'candidates' handbook', aiming to provide potential candidates with general information on the elections.

Additionally, the Human Rights and anti-Discrimination Commission also conducted electoral awareness activities targeting the RFMF, concentrating on the link between elections and human rights.

Partnerships

The 2018 MOG report recommended the FEO focus on voter awareness and an expansion of partnerships, including with CSOs. The MOG welcomes the FEO's recent expansion of its partnerships, including with the United Nations Development Programme, to significantly increase voter awareness among younger voters in remote areas and women in general. During the

electoral cycle, the FEO also implemented programs with the Ministry of Education to include civic education for high school students.

The FEO also significantly increased its engagement with grass-roots organisations who have strong community links, having engaged over 180 organisations. This was a shift in approach from 2018 where the FEO engaged larger, established CSOs, including those that traditionally delivered civic education, and worked within communities, while also engaging in policy formulation and advocacy.

Observations

The MOG observes that this change in approach resulted in a level of wariness among several long-established civil society actors and the electoral administration authorities. The MOG notes that active participation of civil society in electoral-related activities, including using civil society as domestic observers, is a component of a healthy electoral democracy.

Voter Information and Awareness Efforts

A well-informed electorate is essential to any electoral process; informed voters enhance the quality of the election as well as the elected body. Participation of well-informed voters is an essential building-block in the foundation of a meaningful democracy.

Fiji faces many challenges when preparing and conducting electoral operations; all those challenges are echoed in voter information and awareness activities and materials that FEO produced for this purpose. Geography accounts for a fair share of the challenges in Fiji as its population is spread over in approximately 800 islands. With an important rural population, electoral information and awareness activities pose significant transportation difficulties and logistical hurdles. There are also social, cultural and economic issues: low literacy rates in rural areas, multiple languages and traditions, not enough infrastructure and communication, and limited access to media from a share of the population.

Observations

The FEO is solely responsible for ensuring timely and accurate voter information. However, the MOG assesses that longer-term, broad voter awareness programs should not be considered exclusively as an FEO activity, but rather could be designed, managed and implemented as a multi-member responsibility in a comprehensive partnership between electoral authorities, government agencies and civil society. These efforts should be led by the FEO with key messages to ensure accuracy and consistency throughout the materials and activities (printed, digital, face to face sessions) and FEO vetted messages. Broad awareness programs do not necessarily include the FEO's own voter information materials need to be developed distinctly but core messages of information products developed by FEO can serve as inputs to broaden voter awareness activities and, in turn, promote key information regarding electoral operations (in particular voter registration and polling).

Lessons learned and intensive research of good practices in the region, have proved that face-to-face, community level activities, especially in rural areas, are the most effective tool to increase voter awareness, particularly for women and low literacy level populations. In research conducted, consistently, these kinds of programs are the better recalled by voters and are mentioned as the preferred communications channel and most trusted source of information. Face-to-face sessions are particularly effective for the provision of messages in rural contexts because these can be tailored to reflect concrete situations and more importantly, can consider specific sensitivities of the different audiences.

Fiji, as other countries in the region, retains a strong oral tradition, and many people in the outlying islands struggle with full literacy. The option of face-to-face awareness building is costly given the substantial resources required and the high cost of transportation between islands; nevertheless, local culture and past experience amply justify this approach as a means to attain meaningful engagement with the varied communities that constitute the voters list.

While other varied communication channels (radio, TV, printed media and digital platforms) should continue to be used, MOG assesses that the approach used by the FEO in the lead-up to the 2022 elections, heavily relying on face-to-face meetings, should be maintained and reinforced as the most appropriate and effective methodology.

In any information and awareness program, media plays an important role. As part of its external relations policy, the FEO would benefit by having more systematic relations with the media. Consistent and clear information should be the basis for strong ties between the electoral authorities and the media to achieve an effective impact of voter awareness and the overall credibility of the administration. A productive and healthy FEO-media relationship is essential for longer-term, broad voter awareness programs even in non-electoral periods.

The MOG recognises the role of electoral officers in the field in providing information to voters in the course of their own other roles and duties, particularly during the verification process of the National Register of Voters. Given that field electoral staff were noted as a good source of election information following the 2018 general elections, the MOG's recommendation is to integrate face-to-face awareness responsibility into scope of work for FEO staff. Nevertheless, because of the short time that electoral officers are actually recruited in the field, they cannot become a priority channel for provision of pre-polling voter awareness for the purposes of the broad awareness program. Therefore, while recognising that electoral officers in the field are extremely helpful in the provision of voter information in the period immediately before an electoral event (registration or polling), it could be up to civil society organisations (including community, grass-roots groups) to become effective sources for face-to-face awareness activities in the in-between election periods.

The MOG found the FEO's voter awareness efforts to be effective, including through the cascading training of trainers. Key activities and the materials used in its face-to-face activities, in particular the briefing flip charts, were helpful and effective. Nevertheless, a continued partnership with grass-roots community groups could also enhance the effects of face-to-face activities, who are well served by the use of traditional forms of communication like music (song, dance), folk

theatre, and other forms of communication related to folk culture and scripts (such as puppet shows). These activities, based on island realities and conducted local in languages, should impact voter awareness activities as they are cultural in nature and bound with principles of people's political human rights. They require social organisation and interaction between citizens, hence the effectiveness and longer lasting impact from the roots and up.

Media representatives reported to the MOG that compared to previous elections, during the 2022 process the FEO did not fully harness the potential of the traditional media channels in support of voter information and awareness. They also highlighted that improving the 2022 experiences on voter information and awareness could help in the consolidation of existing partnerships, and in building new ones, allowing further diversification of communication channels and media to more specifically target communities outside the main cities.

The MOG notes the FEO's continued long-term work with educational authorities, including the inclusion of elections as part of the high school curricula, has had significant impact on voter education.

Recommendation 13

The MOG recommends that the EC and FEO strengthen efforts to build productive partnerships with civil society organisations during both the pre-election phase and following the issuance of the Writ I and to actively work with CSOs in voter awareness, information, and education activities.

Domestic and International Observers

The Minister for Elections has the power to invite domestic and international observers to take part in a general election⁵¹. The MOG noted that there were no domestic observers invited in 2022 or public notice that would both encourage and support applications from domestic observers.

Observations

Fijian civil society representatives expressed a strong interest to the MOG in observing future general elections. The MOG notes that inclusion of civil society within the electoral process is a net benefit for the strengthening of democratic traditions and inclusivity. Engaging with international civil society, potentially through observation activities, would also be of benefit to Fiji's democracy through sharing international experience and expertise.

Recommendation 14

The MOG recommends that consideration be given to how domestic observers and, if the Fijian governments sees value in it, non-governmental foreign observers, could be incorporated into future electoral processes, including general elections and during the electoral cycle.

⁵¹ See *Electoral Act 2014*, s 119.

Women's Participation

A key concern raised with the MOG was the September 2021 amendment to the Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act 2012 which required individuals to register to vote using their name as specified on their birth certificate. Non-government stakeholders, including some voters, criticised this amendment as adversely affecting women and iTaukei, who frequently use names that differ from that used on their birth certificate.

Without further disaggregated statistics on voter turnout and the voter register, the MOG cannot assess the impact of the amendment. However, stakeholders raised concerns that the amendment had not been subject to sufficient consultation contributing to confusion amongst some communities which may result in a lower voter turnout specially of women voters. The MOG is aware that this amendment is currently the subject of legal challenge.

Observations

In relation to women's representation in the electoral process, the MOG commends the high proportion of women in leadership roles within the FEO. Of the polling stations visited by observers, during Pre-Polling and Election Day, the MOG observed that 73.79 percent of Electoral Officers were women, and 67.54 percent of Presiding Officers were women.

With respect to female candidates, the MOG has noted with concern in that there has been a decline both in the proportion of woman candidates and parliamentarians in the 2022 Election, which may be in part to the lack of safeguards for gender diversity within the open-list proportional representation system. In previous elections, a female (and male) candidate have gained seats in parliament on the "coattails" a strong vote share by the party leader, despite low votes received. Despite the major party leaders again winning the share of votes in 2022, with a more fragmented election result and more parties winning seats in parliament, the opportunities for female candidates decreased.

Recommendation 15

The MOG recommends that all stakeholders, and particularly political parties, continue their efforts to promote women's representation and safeguard gender diversity in the electoral system, including as candidates; and that gender safeguards be integrated into any electoral system reforms. In line with recommendation 1, the MOG recommends that reviewing restrictions on election related activities for domestic and traditional CSOs, particularly in relation to candidate-development activities, which will result in wider participation in the electoral system by all sectors of society, including women. the FEO should consider broadening its voter outreach to include village women's committees and the EC should work with women's advocacy groups (and other CSOs) in voter awareness and information.

Participation by voters with a disability

The MOG appreciates that FEO have continued to make significant efforts to engage with organisations representing persons with disabilities to enable assisted voting. The MOG welcomes amendments to the Electoral Act in this regard⁵².

Observations

The MOG commends the intention of the Elections Disability Access Working Group (EDAWG) to continue to meet after the 2022 General Election, rather than disbanding and regrouping ahead of the next General Election, so that disability-related issues can be improved iteratively. The MOG observed that persons with disabilities were assisted to vote during pre-Polling and on Election Day, including voter materials being available in braille⁵³. However, noting the challenging locations in which many polling stations were located, of the polling stations visited, at the time of issuing this Interim Statement, MOG observer teams rated 66.28 percent of Pre-Polling and Election Day polling stations as having adequate infrastructure to support independent access for persons with disabilities. Where infrastructure was not adequate, the MOG welcomes that persons with disabilities were assisted to vote outside of the pre-polling and polling stations⁵⁴ and even in some cases, with Polling Agents present, materials were taken closer to their domicile to facilitate voting. MOG observer data indicated that only 58 percent of people with disabilities were assisted to vote.

Recommendation 16

The MOG commends the steps taken by the FEO and the EDAWG to increase participation by persons with disabilities in the Fijian electoral process. In order to enhance the mainstreaming of this work, we encourage the continuation of the work of the Elections Disability Access Working Group (EDAWG), including in non-election years, to develop better support services for voters with disabilities.

IX. Media Coverage of the Electoral Process

Fiji's media reported widely and relatively comprehensively on the electoral campaign, and hosted debates and interviews with a range of candidates from all political parties on radio, television, and social media. The FEO only allows accredited media to report on Fijian elections⁵⁵. In 2022, 13 local media organisations and 12 international media organisations were accredited to report on the election, with a total of 410 accredited media personnel. This is an increase from the 19 accredited media organisations for the 2018 election. As in 2018, no media organisations were denied accreditation in 2022.

⁵² See *Electoral Act 2014*, ss 53 and 57.

⁵³ See *Electoral Act 2014*, s 43(4), which requires that 'facilities provided at a polling station where practicable must be reasonably equipped and designed to enable persons with disabilities or other special needs to cast their vote'.

⁵⁴ In accordance with *Electoral Act 2014*, ss 53 and 57.

⁵⁵ See p 7, <https://www.feo.org.fj/mediahandbook/>.

Laws and guidelines impacting the media

The media's engagement in reporting during an election is regulated by the *Media Industry Development Act 2010 (MIDA Act)*, the *Electoral Act*, relevant codes of conduct and guidelines.

The *MIDA Act* establishes the Media Industry Development Authority (MIDA) to 'encourage, promote and facilitate the development of media organisations and media services in Fiji...[and] ensure that nothing is included in the content of any media service which is against public interest or order, or national interest, or which offends against good taste and decency and creates communal discord'⁵⁶.

The *MIDA Act* includes a Media Code of Ethics and Practice which sets out requirements for accuracy, balance and fairness in media reporting, and an obligation to provide a right of reply.⁵⁷ The Act establishes the Media Tribunal to, *inter alia*, hear and determine complaints referred by MIDA and to adjudicate breaches of media codes.⁵⁸ Where it finds non-compliance with the Act or codes, the Media Tribunal may impose financial penalties of up to \$FJ100,000 for media organisations and \$FJ25,000 for editors, and/or prison terms not exceeding 2 years.⁵⁹ An amendment in 2015 removed individual liability of journalists.

MIDA is also responsible for ensuring media organisations comply with restrictions during the 'blackout' period before the close of polls, as set out in s 118 of the *Electoral Act 2014*. Subsection 118(1) prohibits any media publishing, printing or broadcasting any 'campaign advertisement, debate, opinion or interview on any election issue or on any political party or candidate 'during the 48-hour period before polling day and on polling day before the close of polling; s 118(2) provides that any publication or broadcast during this time that relates to the election must be pre-approved by MIDA; and s 118(4) sets out penalties for non-compliance of up to 5 years' imprisonment.

The conduct of opinion polls is regulated by the *Electoral Act 2014*, under s 110A, a newly introduced amendment to the Act, and by guidelines as prescribed by the EC from time to time⁶⁰. In July 2022 and September 2022⁶¹, the EC published guidelines which, *inter alia*, adopted the opinion polling guidelines of the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR) and World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR)⁶².

⁵⁶ See *Media Industry Development Act 2010*, s 8.

⁵⁷ *Media Industry Development Act 2010*, Schedule 1.

⁵⁸ *Media Industry Development Act 2010*, s 50.

⁵⁹ *Media Industry Development Act 2010*, ss 65, 66.

⁶⁰ See *Bill No. 49 of 2022*.

⁶¹ <https://www.electoralcommission.org.fj/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Decision-14.pdf>;

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.fj/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Decision-13.pdf>

⁶² <https://www.electoralcommission.org.fj/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ckquzqnez038tkjtrob30iitd-esomar-wapor-key-requirements-for-opinion-polls-and-published-surveys.pdf>.

Observations

The MOG observed that the media in Fiji generally enabled parties, candidates and others to present their messages to voters, and on balance, the media informed voters of their choices.

Despite a relatively robust industry, many media stakeholders expressed to the MOG that the environment in 2022 was more restrictive than in 2018. Stakeholders said that this had led to a culture of self-censorship amongst journalists due to the severe consequences of statutory default.⁶³ Stakeholders also noted the onerous requirements for publishing opinion polls, which resulted in no polls being published since legislation was introduced on the subject in August 2022⁶⁴.

The MOG observes that reports from stakeholders of a more restricted media environment are consistent with Fiji's recent decline in the Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index. Fiji was ranked 57 out of 180 countries for press freedoms in 2018 but fell to 102 in 2022 - its lowest ranking since 2014 and making it the lowest ranked Pacific country.

Although legislatively remaining a body, the MOG observed that the status of MIDA had changed considerably since the 2018 election. The MOG was advised that MIDA no longer has any full-time staff, nor performs the functions prescribed to it under the *MIDA Act 2010* or the *Electoral Act 2014*. Consequently, the MOG was unable to meet with anyone from MIDA. The MOG also observed that the FEO had taken over some roles that it had previously shared with MIDA, such as media accreditations, and had taken on a monitoring role, such as requesting the media issue retractions or corrections using the newly created offence on 'publication of false statements'⁶⁵.

Media stakeholders advised the MOG that they considered they were still bound by the *MIDA Act*, including the requirement to seek MIDA's prior approval for reporting during the blackout period, despite the fact that MIDA is no longer performing its functions. At times during the 2022 election period, the MOG observed media being directed to submit questions, such as queries about journalistic compliance with the blackout period, to MIDA⁶⁶.

The MOG spoke to a range of media organisations that said they were committed to reporting the news as they saw it. However, they advised that there was a culture of self-censorship especially among younger journalists. Most media sources advised that the potential for - and severity of - penalties under the *MIDA Act* was a cause of significant concern. This was despite the fact that it was widely acknowledged that MIDA is effectively non-operational and some of its elections-related functions have been effectively taken over by the SoE. The MOG heard from a range of media organisations that uncertainty and confusion about the application of the legal framework impacted on their willingness to report on some issues.

⁶³ For example, under the *Electoral Act*, contravention of the media blackout laws (s 118) carries a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment, and commission of the offence 'publication of false statements' (s 144A) carries a maximum of \$50,000, 5 years imprisonment, or both.

⁶⁴ See *Bill No. 49 of 2022*.

⁶⁵ *Electoral Act 2014*, s 144^a.

⁶⁶ Pursuant to *Electoral Act*, s 118(1).

Media organisations advised that regulatory changes⁶⁷, had effectively stifled the conduct of opinion polls. Some stakeholders expressed the view that opinion polling assists the electoral process by paving the way for acceptance of the results of the election. The MOG noted that no opinion polls had been undertaken since legislative changes on the issue were introduced in August 2022, and since the EC had made findings against a media organisation that it had failed to comply with the relevant opinion polling guidelines⁶⁸.

Recommendation 17 (Aspirational)

The MOG notes that the MIDA is widely understood by the media and other stakeholders to be no longer operational. Nevertheless, the *MIDA Act 2010* and the *Electoral Act 2014*, which remain in force, endow MIDA with roles and responsibilities some of which have the potential to impose significant penalties on media organisations and certain individuals. The MOG recommends reviewing the MIDA's mandate and operations to create greater certainty and clarity for media organisations.

Recommendation 18

The MOG notes that Fiji's requirement for media to obtain prior approval from MIDA for reporting during the blackout period appears an unnecessary constraint. The MOG recommends removing this requirement in the law or providing greater clarity through published guidelines.

Recommendation 19

Noting the real risk of “fake news” and deliberate information distortion during elections, the MOG nevertheless recommends reviewing the appropriateness of the EC's guidelines on the conduct of opinion polls and considering whether they, taken together with the *MIDA Act 2010* and the *Electoral Act 2014*, contribute to an unreasonable constraint on the media's ability to contribute to public discourse and political accountability.

X. Pre-polling, Postal and Election Day Voting

Elections are a public service and, as such, should be delivered in a professional, cost-effective and sustainable manner. While the independence, impartiality and transparency of the overall electoral management was already treated above (chapter V), it is important to assess the EMB's capacity to prepare and deliver an efficient electoral service; this task fell almost entirely under the responsibility of the FEO.

The MOG was able to closely follow the last stages of the electoral preparations, following the issuance of the writ. The FEO was open and available to engage with the MOG and to answer

⁶⁷ <https://www.electoralcommission.org.fj/guidelines-on-opinion-polls-published-surveys/>;
<https://www.electoralcommission.org.fj/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Decision-13.pdf>.

⁶⁸ <https://fijisun.com.fj/2022/08/31/the-electoral-commission-finds-that-the-fiji-sun-breaches-the-opinion-poll-guidelines/>.

any questions about any aspect of the operational preparations. It is the MOG's assessment that the FEO was able to complete all technical and operational preparations on time for pre-polling, postal voting and Election Day polling and counting, as well as the counting processes at the National Count Center and the aggregation of results at the National Results Tally Center, despite logistical challenges and difficult geographical and weather conditions.

Observations

The MOG's assessment is that the FEO technical and operational responsibilities were fulfilled successfully overall. The MOG witnessed the level of professionalism and efficiency of the FEO staff, both permanent and temporary. The operational training program was particularly impressive and was a major asset in ensuring overall consistency in the application of procedures.

While the FEO benefitted from international technical assistance, it was encouraging to see the high level of national ownership of the electoral management process, which bodes well for its sustainability. This is true also in regards to the IT component; despite having some links with the vendor in terms of the biometric technology for the voter register, the in-house know-how appears to ensure complete technological independence in maintaining and updating the technology involved in the voter register operations. This national technical know-how also supported in a satisfactory manner the results management at the National Count Center following the polling.

Voting during pre-polling and on Election Day took place in a calm and peaceful environment in which Fiji's police performed their duties diligently and voters demonstrated commitment, often queuing in heat, wind and rain. The MOG observed polling station staff to be competent, courteous, and well-prepared.

Pre-polling

Pre-polling provided residents of nursing homes or health care facilities, members of the disciplined forces, those under pre-trial detention or serving a sentence of imprisonment, and those living in remote areas with the opportunity to vote.

From 5 to 9 December, the MOG observed pre-polling across Fiji's four divisions. The MOG visited 115 out of a total of 613 pre-polling venues (18.7 percent). The MOG visited polling stations unannounced and had unrestricted access to conduct their observations.



Observations

The MOG observed the FEO to be well-prepared to deliver pre-polling services. The MOG acknowledges the geographical and environmental challenges associated with delivering pre-polling in Fiji, particularly in remote areas. The MOG commends the FEO on their efforts to support all members of the community in exercising their right to vote.

Nearly all pre-polling stations respected the published times for opening. The MOG welcomes the FEO's decision to extend the time to vote in certain areas to support students who were finishing exams or to compensate for late openings.

MOG observers noted the high proportion of women POs. Almost all POs and PDWs were diligent, courteous and serious in performing their roles.

The MOG also witnessed the packing of sensitive materials for pre-polling at the FEO Central Warehouse and the checking of materials by the corresponding POs on arrival at polling stations.

The MOG did not observe any campaign activities in the area surrounding the polling stations, although it was reported that in a few polling stations there were political parties' material within the 300 meters from the polling station.

MOG observers were treated with respect and courtesy by the FEO pre-polling teams and were not obstructed in their observation. Accredited party polling agents were also afforded the opportunity to observe voting, and agents were present (at least one) at almost 92 percent of polling stations visited by the MOG. Most polling agents followed the official procedures, although

there were reports of isolated cases of over-active and even aggressive behaviour from some of them.

The MOG noted the cordial interactions between voters, the FEO pre-polling teams, traditional leaders in remote communities and police officers providing security for pre-polling. The MOG did not observe any intimidating behaviour or disorder around any of the polling venues visited during pre-polling. The FEO's pre-poll teams followed the voting procedures, and voters were afforded a safe atmosphere to maintain the secrecy of the vote. Voters appeared keen to participate in the process and for the most part, were patient when queuing to vote. Voter queues dissipated quickly

MOG observer teams noted that 72.15 percent of people with disabilities and 55.7 percent of illiterate voters were assisted to vote during pre-polling. 94.2 percent of the time the POs disabled voters to vote.

The MOG noted some inconsistent application of processes related to voters not on the voter list; nevertheless, this was not systematic and did not have a significant impact on the overall integrity of the pre-poll voting process. During pre-polling, MOG observers recorded 39 instances of voters being turn away without voting. In most instances this was due to being registered elsewhere.

In one case in the Northern Division, there was confusion during pre-polling regarding what were called 'absentee ballots' (possibly 'tendered ballots'), for which the polling staff followed unclear procedures.

Despite some isolated cases regarding confusion and misinformation on the timing of the presence of the pre-poll teams (particularly in the Northern Division), most of previous issues in this regard were solved for the 2022 pre-polling process. The FEO finalised the tentative pre-poll schedule well in advance and published it earlier than anticipated. The pre-polling schedules with times and locations were widely published, as well as communicated directly to village heads; the FEO website displayed-polling deployment schedules in 3D interactive maps.

The electoral environment for polling was calm. In a few isolated cases, some voters were not allowed to vote because of confusion regarding the time of closing of the pre-polling station.

Pre-poll teams and Fiji Police secured ballot boxes and adhered to ballot box seal and transfer processes.

MOG observers indicated that the pre-polling process was generally well managed, with competent polling staff. Polling procedures were widely followed, with only minor incidents that had no bearing in the integrity of the process. The overall conduct of pre-polling was rated as 'very good '(78.48 percent) and 'good '(21.52 percent) by MOG observer teams.

Detailed observation data can be found in *Chapter XIII: Observer Data - Pre-Polling Observations*.

Election Day

The MOG deployed 90 observers across Fiji's four divisions. The observers visited over 200 polling venues and 450 polling stations. As with pre-polling, the MOG visited polling stations unannounced and had unrestricted access to conduct their observations.



Observations

The MOG notes there were late changes to the location of some polling stations on Election Day due to *force majeure*. These changes were published widely, including on the FEO website, via local news and on social media which seemed to mitigate any potential impact on voters. The MOG is aware of criticism from some civil society members that these changes had not been communicated as effectively, especially outside urban centres. In most locations, by request via phone communication, the FEO provided free public transport to assist voters to reach polling stations in time.

Of the polling procedures observed, no significant irregularities or impediments were noted. The MOG also notes that staff were well-trained and resourced to undertake their duties. The MOG did not observe any campaigning at or around polling venues. Procedure was followed diligently throughout the process. Approximately 86 percent of the polling stations attended by the MOG opened on time, and only in isolated cases were there justified delays (weather conditions related, small accidents on the road) in the opening of the polling station. All ballot boxes arrived at polling stations sealed, and all voting materials (including ballots and secret envelopes) were available. POs followed opening procedures, with ballot boxes opened and resealed and polling stations set up appropriately. Voters' hands were checked for indelible ink before being sanitised (a COVID protection measure), voter IDs were checked and names crossed off the voter list, and voters

were then able to vote in secrecy. All voters had their fingers inked after voting, and their ballots (in secret envelopes) deposited in the ballot box.

The polling staff was assigned appropriately (almost all with five members), and the MOG observers noted the high proportion of women POs. Almost all POs and PDWs were diligent, courteous and serious in performing their roles.

The MOG observed that voting took place in a calm and peaceful environment in which Fiji's police performed their duties diligently and voters demonstrated commitment, often queuing in heat, wind, and rain. The MOG found that polling teams adhered to established voting procedure, thus protecting voter privacy and security of the vote and ballot box.

In most cases (with some rare exceptions), voters without an ID, but whose names were on the polling station voter list, were allowed to vote. In total the MOG observed 12 instances of voters being turned away without voting or being directed to correct polling station. In most instances, this was due to missing names.

Noting the difficult conditions in which many polling stations were located, the MOG observed that approximately half of polling stations attended were accessible to people with disabilities.

The MOG team also noted that, in areas where FEO tents were used, the space allowed for the polling station was quite restricted (although this did not compromise voter secrecy). Given the special conditions of pre-polling stations, it was noted that it was difficult to actually delimit the 300 meters diameter, but it was also highlighted that the polling staff adopted an adequate 'practical' approach.

The MOG observed many instances of assisted voting in the polling station, including for the elderly and people with disability. Observers noted that 58.5 percent of people with disabilities were assisted to vote during Election Day voting. In almost all cases, this assistance was provided in accordance with procedure, and POs made appropriate judgements about when and where assistance was warranted (usually for elderly voters unable to see the ballot paper clearly or confused by the process). Almost all assistance was provided by the PO.

Security during voting and for the transfer of ballot boxes was diligent, with police officers present at all times. In some cases, police officers were asked for help by the polling staff at the request of POs, and while this goes against the letter of the FEO procedures, this was done in the name of collaboration and in no way signalled any attempts at interference in the process.

Procedures for transfer of ballot boxes from FEO HQ and Area Office teams to polling staff at the start of voting, and from polling teams back to FEO secure storage at the end of voting, were adhered to in all cases.

MOG observer teams rated the overall administration of polling stations on Election Day as very good (71.92 percent) and good (27.79 percent) and bad (0.29 percent).

Detailed observation data can be found under *Chapter XIII Observer Data - Election Day Polling Station Opening Observations*.

Postal Voting

Application for postal voting opened following the announcement of the election date, on 30 October 2022 and closed at 17:00 on 23 November 2022 (21 days prior to Election Day). The number of total postal applications stood at 9,916, of which 869 were overseas applications. Voters were able to access the postal voting application form from any FEO office or online. All applicants needed to be a registered Fijian voter. The voter was required to fill all the necessary details required in the form, provide updated and correct personal details in the form and ensure that they sign in the space provided. The filling of the application was required to be witnessed by any of the FEO authorised personnel. The completed application form was required to be submitted to the FEO, either in any of electoral offices or via the internet. A copy of the voter card needed to be included.

Registration for postal voting closed on 23 November 2022. Once an application was approved, the FEO sent a postal voting package to the voter. The FEO received 9,916 applications for postal voting. The completed package had to be received by the FEO by 18:00 on Election Day. Postal voters achieved a 75.9 percent turnout rate with 7,529 postal votes were received, including 32 invalid votes.

Once the application arrived, the form was verified to ensure all necessary information was included. If it wasn't, there were officials whose job was to call the voter to inform them that their information was incomplete. If the form had all the required information, then the details were entered into the database of the election management system (EMS), and there were two quality assurance checks, before the coordinator approved the form and the SoE formally accepted the application. If the application was rejected, the applicant needed to be informed immediately. Once the application was approved, the voter was not able to vote in person at either a pre-poll or Election Day polling station – their name in the voter lists will have a 'p' notation next to it.

Once the application was approved, the FEO sent a 'postal package' with ballot paper, voter instruction booklet, secret envelope, transmission envelope and a pre-paid return envelope.

Postal ballots were the first ones printed. Unlike the pre-poll and Election Day ballots, they were not bound in 'books' of 50, as they are to be sent individually to the voters and are pre-folded. They also are marked in the back: 'postal ballot'. Postal ballots were sent according to the timing it takes for the ballot to reach by post, starting with the furthest away places.

There were six categories of postal ballots: Australia and New Zealand, Fiji interior, Fiji outer islands, Overseas Pacific, Overseas rest of the world, and Special (including electoral officials, etc.)

Verification of postal votes started on 7 December (seven days before Election Day) and continued until 15 December. The process involved checking that the information entered in the transmission envelopes matched that of the voter's application. Those ballots in the accepted transmission envelopes were placed (in their secret envelopes) in the ballot boxes (650 in each ballot box, equivalent to a 'polling station') and transferred to the Central Processing Center for storage before being transferred on Election Day to the National Count Center. Counting of postal voting started at 18:00 on 14 December at the National Count Center.

Observations

MOG observers were able to witness the process of approval of applications for postal voting (until 23 November) and were allowed to observe the verification of the postal ballots (ending on 15 December).

The MOG notes the FEO supported voters to exercise their right to vote in the 2022 General Election via postal ballot. In particular, the MOG notes overseas registrations were facilitated by Fiji missions abroad who received training from the FEO in delivering voter services. Voter awareness efforts included an overseas registration drive which saw FEO representatives deliver a schedule of in-person awareness sessions to support overseas voters.

XII. Counting, tabulation and announcement of results

Counting began after close of polls at 18:00. Counting was done in the polling stations in the presence of accredited party agents and media representatives, as well as MOG observers. The same people allowed during voting were allowed during counting, except voters; polling agents, observers and media were asked to sit or stand in front of counting tables. No candidates were allowed to observe the counting.

Before starting, the PO informed party agents, observers and media of the counting process, which was continuous (nobody is allowed to enter or leave the PS once the process starts). Polling agents could object to a ballot paper; the PO was invited to consider the objection and decide on it. The counting process had two distinct phases: reconciliation and counting.

Reconciliation

Before opening the ballot box, the PO reconciled the ballot papers, through the records of ballots issued, ballots unused, spoiled/discarded ballots and the number of signatures on the voter list. If there were any discrepancies, the PO contacted the 'hub leader', and the ballot box should not be opened. If there were no discrepancies, PO the opened the ballot box after checking seal numbers, and the staff empties ballot box.

Counting of votes at Polling Station level

Once the ballot boxes were opened, ballots papers are unfolded and sorted by column range, including 'invalid' votes. Ballot papers were considered not valid if the voter's intention was not clear. A ballot paper deemed invalid was not counted if: a) it could identify the voter; b) it was not

marked, did not clearly indicate a candidate number, or indicated a vote for more than one candidate, or the intersection of the cross met on the line of any candidate box; c) a mark allowed identification of voter. The POs were responsible of checking the invalid votes pile and decide on invalidity.

PWDs then bundled ballots in each column range by 50. PWDs counted votes per candidate number, reading out loud the candidate number and number of votes. PO recorded results in the 'results protocol'. There were three copies of the results protocol: original (to go in a tamper evident envelope, TEE, to be transported to the National Results Tally Centre), a pink copy (to be displayed in a publicly accessible area outside the PS) and a green copy (to go inside the ballot box). Following completion of the protocol of results, it was then signed by the PO. This was also witnessed by any three election observers or polling agents.

Once the signing of the Protocol of Results was witnessed, the Presiding Officer called the FEO Call Centre to transmit the result and also sent the results via the *My Polling Assistant App*, for compilation for the publication of provisional results.

Observations

Counting on Election Day took place at polling stations, immediately after closing. The count was observed and signed off by polling agents, as required. Counting for both pre-polling and postal polling was done at the National Count Centre in Suva, following the close of polls at 18:00 on 14 December. Tabulation of results happened at the adjacent National Results Tally Centre, with delivery of both provisional and final results. The results were then communicated to the National Results Centre in Suva via phone and mobile application⁶⁹ to enable provisional results to be published.

Few changes were made to the counting procedures on Election Day for the 2022 general elections. In 2022, the counting process continued to be lengthy, yet the counting procedures supported the accuracy and transparency of the vote count. The process, as observed by MOG teams, built in appropriate checks and procedural redundancies. The basic principle is that counting of votes is a manual process, to ensure transparency and encourage confidence in the results.

Regarding the Official Count, hard copies of the protocol of results were placed into a tamper evident envelope at each polling station and then transported to the Central Processing Centre in Suva, from which they were dispatched to the National Results Centre for tallying, also in Suva. Pre-poll and postal votes were counted at the National Count Centre in Suva and then the overall tabulation of votes was conducted at the National Results Centre.

⁶⁹ Named the 'My Polling Assistant' app.

Processes related to rulings by POs on the validity or invalidity of ballots were highly transparent and well-communicated. The determination of valid votes aligns with international good practice, that is, all ballot papers that show the clear intention of the voter were considered valid.

Following the count, the SEO cross-checked a number of ballot boxes where the number of invalid votes seemed high. This cross-check led to some ballots that were originally found to be invalid ruled as valid and counted in the final results.

Overall, observers reported that presiding officers complied with the instruction to display the 'pink' copy of the protocol of results in a public accessible area at the polling stations. The display of a copy of 'the protocol of results' at a public place outside all polling stations immediately after the counting also aligns with good international good practice.

MOG observers were present for the counting of votes at 29 polling venues and 44 polling stations on Election Day, and during the counting of pre-poll and postal voting at the National Count Centre. The overall conduct of Election Day polling station closing and counting was very good (64.52 percent), good (32.6 percent) and bad (3.23 percent). Detailed observation data can be found under section *Polling Station Closing Observations*.

Counting at the National Counter Centre

Postal ballots and pre-poll ballots were counted at the National Count Centre in Suva. Counting started at 18:00 on Election Day. Additionally, any recounting of Election Day polling ordered by the SoE also took place at the National Count Centre. Recounts were ordered by the SoE in case of mathematical errors in the results protocols or high number of invalid votes, and 19 ballot boxes were recounted.

The MOG had a continued presence for the tabulation of results at the National Results Centre and the National Counting Centre, from 18:00 on Election Day and until Official Results were published.

There were 100 counting teams at the National Count Centre and the MOG observed their performance overall to be careful and methodical. The corresponding ballot boxes were transferred to the Count Centre on Election Day, and were ready to start the count at 18:00, when Election Day polling ended. Political parties and candidates' polling agents, as well as media representatives were allowed to witness the activities at the National Count Centre.

Counting procedures for postal voting and pre-polling closely resembled those used during Election Day (including reconciliation of ballots), with the exception that when the ballot box was opened, counting officials have to remove the ballot papers from the 'secret envelopes' where the ballots have been placed. Once counting of a ballot box started, it could not stop until completion of the count.

The counting procedures at the Count Centre included the following steps:

- the ballot box was opened, the counting staff opened the secret envelopes and sorted out the ballot papers and sorted out into column number ranges;
- all the ballot papers in each column range were then counted, including the invalid ballot papers;
- each column total was added;
- ballot papers were then sorted by candidate number, proceeding column by column;
- the ballot papers for each candidate number were counted;
- the results are then entered in the 'protocols of results' worksheet;
- the results were uploaded in the results app and transmitted to the Results Centre for publication of provisional results; and
- all result protocols for pre-polling and postal results were displayed publicly at the Count Centre.

Observations

The MOG observed that the FEO's procedures were followed with no significant irregularities noted. Counting proceeded in a systematic, methodical and transparent manner. The MOG observed that the results tallying processes were designed appropriately and had sufficient safeguards to verify the protocol of results before figures were entered into the Results Management Information System (RMiS).

Election Day votes are tabulated and counted manually at polling stations and pre-poll, postal and recount votes were counted manually at the National Count Centre, as required. The MOG observed that the tabulation process is robust with appropriate quality assurance processes.

Tabulation and Announcement of Results

The tabulation of results plays a crucial role in ensuring that the electoral process reflects the will of the voters. International good practice requires the tabulation processes be fair, impartial, and transparent.

Tabulation of results for the Fiji 2022 election was conducted at the National Results Tally Centre in Suva. The FEO recruited and trained 300 data entry clerks to integrate these results into the FEO's RMiS working continuously in eight-hour shifts until the results were all entered.

The FEO organised tabulation of results in two distinct modes of operation for after the polls closed: 'provisional' and 'official'. The 'provisional' mode of tabulation, which was previously not spelled out in the *Electoral Act 2014*, was now included in the legal provisions. It is a system introduced by the electoral authorities to only provide to the public, speedy information about the trends of the election results, but those results have no legal standing, nor are they part of the official counting process.

For the provisional results, and following the end of counting, presiding officers relay results by telephone and the *My Polling Assistant App* to the Results Centre and provide the basis for the FEO's publication of these provisional results – which were made available in real time on the

FEO Results App. This process was finalised, as scheduled, by 07:00 the day following Election Day.

Once the Results Centre receives the originals of each polling station's protocol of results, it begins tabulating final or 'official' results. This is the tabulation process outlined in the Act which collates the results of all polling stations, including pre-poll and postal votes results.

The tabulation of 'official' results by the FEO employed a blind double entry methodology of the data of the original copy of the 'protocol of results'. The RMiS integrated a number of checks and balances throughout the process, including various 'triggers' that would result in an audit of the information entered in the database.

Observations

As standard practice, the FEO introduced a number of measures to enhance the accuracy and security of the process, including reducing the size of data-entering teams and doubling the number of supervisors, making technical choices to increase correctness and integrity of the information entered, as well as supplying clerks with a separate keyboard to minimise data entry errors.

During the tabulation process, the FEO provided political parties with paper copies of the original protocol of results as well as print-outs upon request of the information entered in the system per polling stations.

The FEO contracted an independent audit of the RMiS to ensure the security and integrity of the results system were guaranteed. Additionally, in order to increase transparency, the FEO developed a mobile phone application the *FEO Results App* to publish provisional results that were uploaded in real time, as a service to the public free of cost.

Once the tabulation of official results finalised, the 'Final National Results Tally' was produced, which becomes a legal binding document at that moment, and the SoE immediately presented it to the EC for the official declaration of results and allocation of seats. The EC then returned the writ to the President on December 19, formally ending the general elections process.

The MOG notes that the *FEO Results App*, used to publish provisional results, a process separate from the Official results processing, was taken offline on the evening of 14 December, due to an 'anomaly' in the data⁷⁰. The MOG was notified immediately, and MOG observers attended the National Results Centre and were briefed by the SoE and their IT staff. The error was resolved, and the *FEO Results App* was restored after approximately four hours with corrected data.

MOG also noted some speculation that the provisional trend created an opportunity for the FEO to 're-tabulate' official results. The MOG assesses this speculation unfounded since the pink slips

⁷⁰ The *FEO Results App* provides a means for provisional and final results to be published. The incident referred above occurred while provisional results were being published, as required under the *Electoral Act 2014*, s 102A.

containing the Protocol of Results – against which official results can be compared – were also publicly available from the conclusion of counting of each ballot box.

Following this event, several political parties and commentators online expressed concerns. The MOG notes that the *FEO Results App* was not used to count votes, but only to publish provisional results. Hence MOG notes that this anomaly had no effects or consequences over the processing of official results.

The MOG notes that the periodic publication of final results was initially slower than anticipated, based on the publication of results every six hours in 2014 and 2018. The MOG understands that the delay was due to additional quality control processes that were implemented after the ‘anomaly’ that occurred in relation to the *FEO Results App*.

The MOG found the data entry elements of the tabulation process generally well-organised and operational arrangements for the implementation of the RMIS to be efficient, with sufficient checks and quality control measures to ensure accuracy. The MOG was also confident that the FEO had taken the necessary measures to ensure RMIS security, ensuring the integrity of the system and the tabulation of results.

The total number of invalid votes cast in the 2022 General Election was 3,326, or 0.7 percent of ballots cast, compared to 0.92 percent recorded in 2018. On 17 November, the FEO cross-checked a number of ballot boxes where the rate of invalid votes seemed unduly high⁷¹. This cross-check led to some ballots that were originally found to be invalid ruled valid and counted in the final results.

Recommendation 20

Noting the high-tension atmosphere of elections and, at times, a combative relationship between the SoE and the media, the MOG recommends a review of policies and methods of communication of important election information, including provisional and final results. The FEO could also consider a simple analogue back-up, such as a manual results tally board, to complement the digital *FEO Results App* with strengthened verification protocols.

Final National Results Tally and Seat Allocation

In the early afternoon of 18 December 2022, the SoE signed the ‘Final National Results Tally’ and presented it to the EC, which in turn calculated and then announced the allocation of seats. The EC Chair returned the electoral Writ to the President on 19 December 2022, formally ending the 2022 General Election. Four parties reached the five percent threshold required by law to secure seats in Parliament.

The MOG notes some considerable differences between the number of votes that individual successful candidates received, with some receiving fewer than 600 votes. The MOG notes that

⁷¹ The relevant power to order a re-count is granted to the Supervisor under s92(8) of the *Electoral Act*.

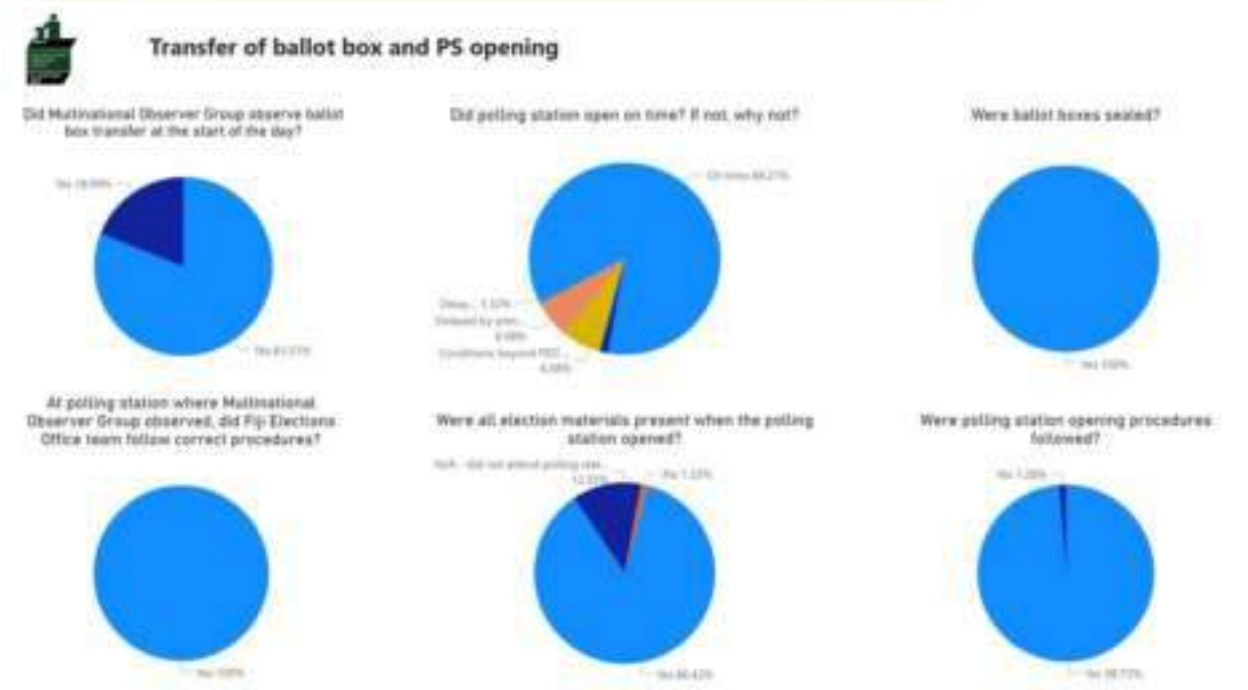
while voters vote for candidates, the logic of a Proportional Representation system is that the number of seats a party receives is a product of the overall performance of a party and not of individual candidates.

No political party won a majority of seats in the 2022 election. The seats were assigned as per the below table:

Party	Number of seats
FijiFirst	26
People's Alliance (PA)	21
National Federation Party (NFP)	5
Social Democratic Liberal Party (SODELPA)	3

XIII. Observer Data

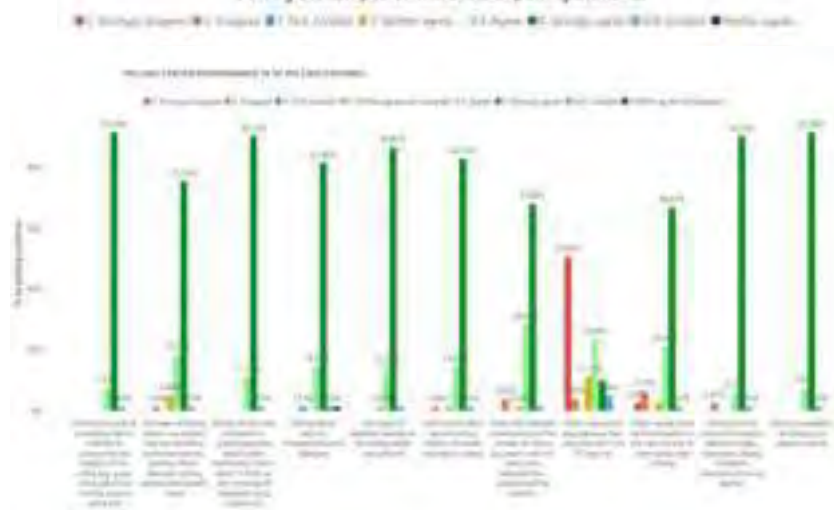
Pre-Polling





Conditions inside polling station

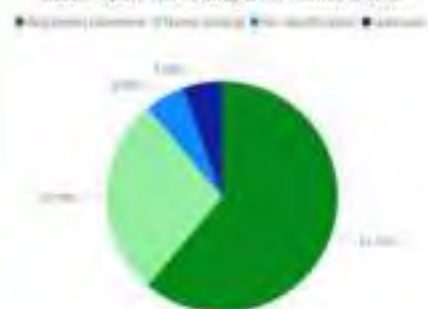
Polling station performance (% of polling stations)



(Number of voters observed being turned away without voting)

39

Reason voters turned away if not allowed to vote

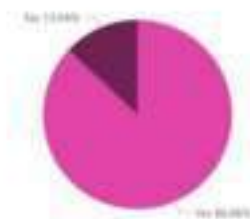


End of Voting and Transfer of Ballot Boxes

Did Multinational Observer Group observe ballot box transfer at the end of the day?



(4) Maritime polling stations: Did you inspect the boat's secure room?



Was there a police escort?



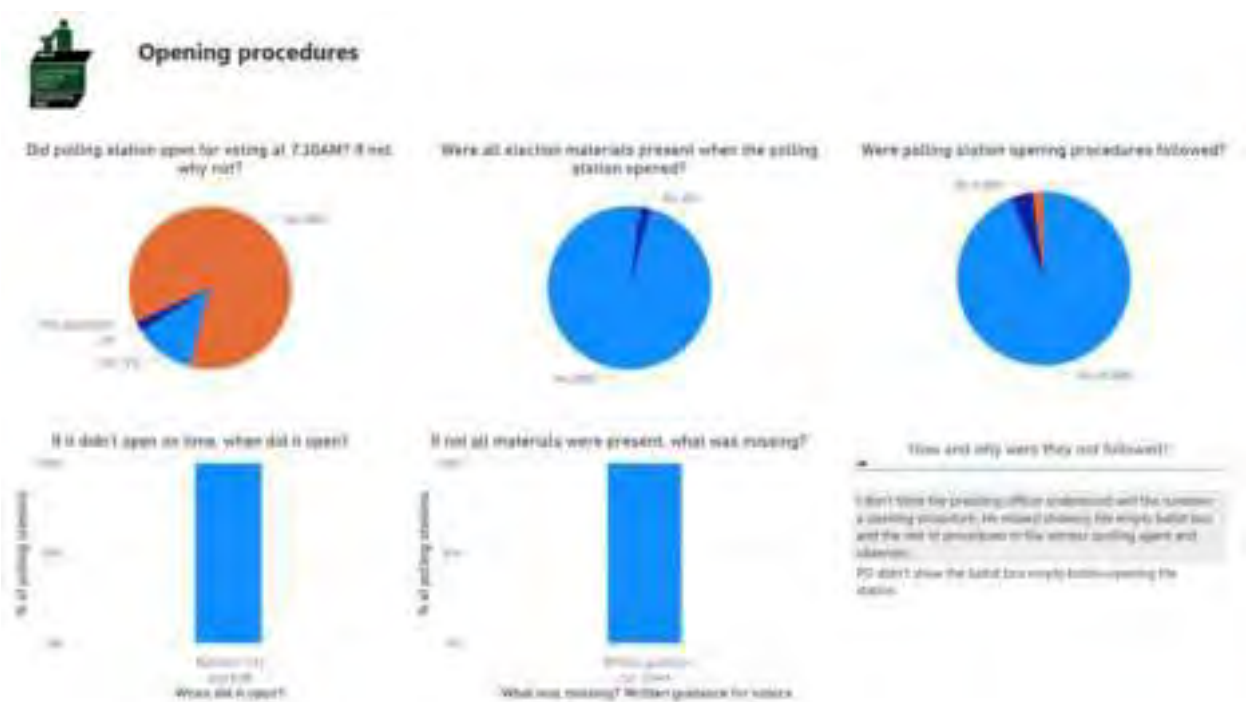
Were all the buses sealed?



Will married jelling stations like the hotel's secure rooms locked and under police guard?



Election Day Polling Station Opening Observations





Officials and unauthorised people

Were any unauthorised people at the polling station?



Were they obstructing or interfering in polling station operations?



Average size of Fij-Elections Office team

5.20

Average number of women in team

4.04

Was the presiding officer a woman?



Overall conduct of polling station opening

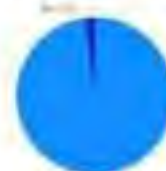
Overall conduct of polling station opening was



Did anyone inform you of problems at this polling station?



Was your observation restricted in any way?



Significant issues identified by observers

FIO taking photos within polling station after start of polling

I don't think the presiding officer announced well the number of opening provisions the manual showing the entire ballot box and the rest of provisions for the witness polling agent and observer.

One of the roles as well as FIO VAP during the voting process was phenomenon by the observer from polling station in all their stations. FIO VAP is the first order in the polling station.

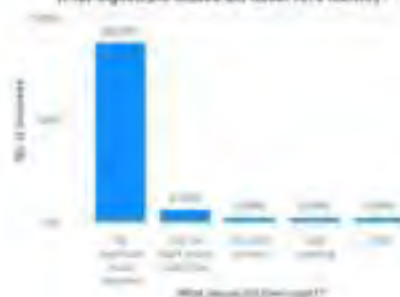
I was asked to wait outside while the election staff had a briefing and made their preparations and was only allowed to enter the polling box once started. There seemed to be a lack of understanding of the role of observers. Otherwise, it seemed procedures were followed. No evidence for ballot paper.

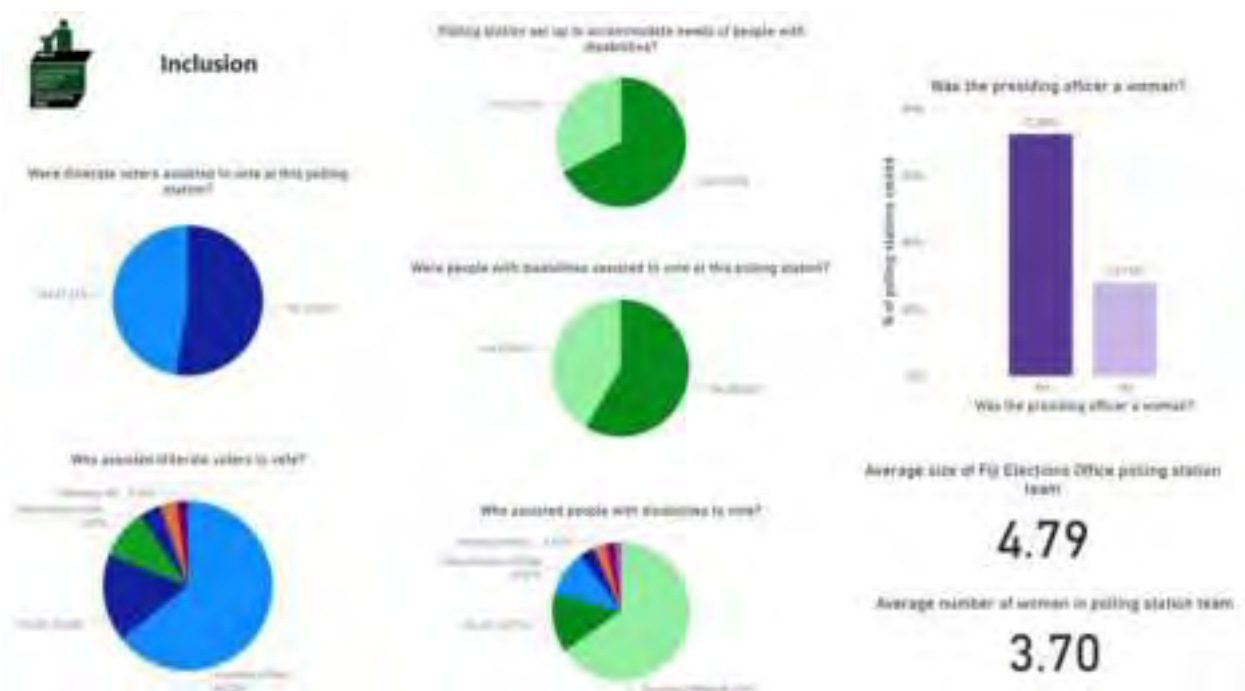
Observer not asked to sign in or out.

VO didn't know the ballot box empty before opening the station.

The polling station had 5 polling stations. The polling station 1 observed opened one because some were missing. Station opened around 2:15. The other four stations opened at 2:30.

What significant issues did observers identify?





Polling Station Closing Observations





Conditions During Polling Station Closing

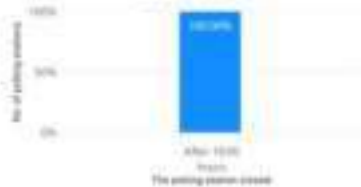
Were any unauthorised people at the polling station?



Did the polling station close at 19:00?



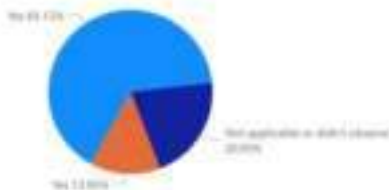
If the polling station did not close on time, did it close before or after 19:00?



Was there tension or unrest near the polling station?



Were people waiting in the queue when the polling station closed allowed to vote?

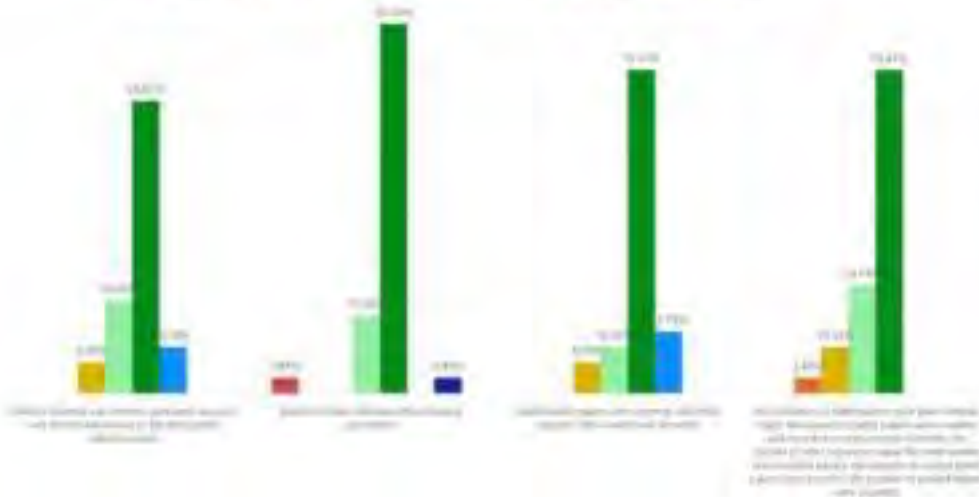


Polling venue closing and counting procedures

Polling venue closing procedures (by polling venue)

Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly agree

% of polling venues





Observer access and overall assessment of polling station closing

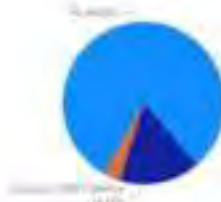
Did all observers have a clear view of counting?



Did the polling agent request a receipt of ballot papers in respect of a ballot?



Were the final results displayed in a public place outside the polling station?



Overall conduct of closing and counting was:



Was your observation of counting restricted in any way?



Was any official complaint filed at the polling station during your observation?



Did anyone inform you of any problems with closing and counting at this polling station?



Observations regarding closing and counting:

Counting finished at the station after 10 PM and the ballot box was not transported from the PS until 12.30 AM. The SC, due to vehicle issues, arranged for transfer from PS via not immediately available. The agent refused to collect their goods. TFI (Public House) used ballot at the PS on most evenings.

Counting procedures did not appear efficient and system seemed limited to local 8 hours only. Transcripts could perhaps be automated.

Police officers' presence in the counting station and outside the polling station appeared to cause officer control the SC to put the area in order after the polling station. Some minor procedural issues (e.g. small ballot box not neatly closed after use was counted post-counting) but overall no significant irregularities.

XIV. Annexes

List of abbreviations

APP - All Peoples Party
 CEDAW - the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
 CRPD - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
 CSO - Civil Society Organisations
 EMB - electoral management body
 EC - Electoral Commission
 FEO - Fijian Elections Office
 FFP - FijiFirst Party
 FICAC - Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption
 FLP - Labour Party
 FPF - Fiji Police Force
 ICCPR - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
 MIDA - Media Industry Development Authority
 MOG - Multinational Observer Group
 NFP - National Federation Party
 NGP - New Generation Party
 PAP - The People's Alliance Party
 PDW – Polling Day Worker
 PO - Presiding Officer
 PS - Polling Station
 RFMF - Republic of Fiji Military Force
 RMIS - Results Management Information System
 SODELPA - Social Democratic Liberal Party
 SoE - Supervisor of Elections
 the Constitution - Constitution of the Republic of Fiji of 2013
 ToR - Terms of Reference
 UFP - Unity Fiji party
 UFP - We Unite Fiji Party

Photo Gallery of MOG activities



The Co-Chairs of the Multinational Observer Group (MOG): the Hon. Rebekha Sharkie MP, Parliament of Australia, Mr Dharmendra Sharma, Senior Deputy Election Commissioner of India and HE Ambassador Muhsin Syihab, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia.



Supervisor of Elections, Mohammed Saneem briefing the MOG Secretariat Observer Coordinator Paul Wojciechowski on security arrangements for the dispatch of sensitive materials to polling venues throughout Fiji.



MOG observers witness the transportation of ballot boxes following pre-polling on Malake Island.



MOG observes Fiji Police transporting sealed ballot boxes.



The MOG Secretariat reviewing amendments to Fiji's electoral legislation and seeking further understanding from Fijian legal experts.



A MOG observer from New Zealand visiting a pre-polling venue in Ogea village in the Lau group.



The Supervisor of Elections briefing MOG Observer Coordinator Paul Wojciechowski and Deputy Coordinator Andrew Edgar on election logistics.



MOG Secretariat member observing the delivery of printed ballots to the FEO's secure storage facility.



MOG observer outside of the central processing centre during the counting process.



MOG observers in the Lomaiviti group during pre-polling.



MOG observer inspects arrangements for sensitive material storage in Labasa.



MOG observers witness voting at a pre-polling venue in Ba Province.

Annex A – Terms of Reference

Multinational Observer Group For 2022 Fijian General Election

INTRODUCTION

This Terms of Reference sets out the framework and scope within which the Multinational Observer Group ('MOG'), on the invitation of the Fijian Government must work and conduct itself and which it must adhere to, as it observes the 2022 Fijian General Election.

Paragraph 1: Scope of Multinational Observation

The MOG will:

- a) Observe and evaluate the functions and operations of the Fijian Elections Office ('FEO') with respect to the 2022 Fijian General Election;
- b) Observe and evaluate the voter registration process and the establishment of the National Register of Voters and Polling Station Voter Lists;
- c) Observe and evaluate the voter awareness campaign including voter information provided or authorised by FEO;
- d) Observe and evaluate the nomination and registration of candidates and conduct of political parties as prescribed in the Fijian *Electoral Act 2014* ('Act');
- e) Observe and evaluate Pre-Poll, postal voting and election day operations and events that facilitate voting operations in compliance with the procedures established in the Act;
- f) Observe and evaluate the vote counting process, the determination of election results and the dissemination thereof;
- g) Observe and evaluate the resolution of disputes throughout the electoral cycle, including any mechanism established to hear and adjudicate election related disputes; and
- h) Assess whether the voter processes of the FEO facilitated and assisted Fijian voters to exercise their right to freely vote and whether the outcome of the 2022 Fijian General Election broadly represented the will of all Fijian voters.

Paragraph 2: Duration of Multinational Observation

- a) The MOG will be made up of both long term observers, who will arrive in Fiji prior to the election date, and short term observers, who will arrive prior to polling and stay until polling and counting have been finalised. The final number of observers and dates of arrival and departure will be mutually decided by the Fijian Government and relevant international partners.
- b) The MOG will commence its tasks once it has been given an induction of electoral laws by the FEO, and has received the accreditation documents from the FEO, and will conclude once the MOG has submitted its report in accordance to Paragraph 3.

Paragraph 3: Reporting

- a) Based on the scope of the MOG as outlined in Paragraph 1, the co-leads will:
- b) Issue an interim media statement at the conclusion of the election detailing the MOG's observations, which will reflect the views of all members of the delegation and will not be attributable to any individual country or organisation; and
- c) (ii) Issue to the Fijian Government, Electoral Commission ('EC') and the FEO an observation report as soon as practical after the conclusion of the election process, which will contain a determination on all the matters provided in the scope of the MOG under Paragraph 1, and where appropriate the observation report will also offer recommendations for improving the integrity and effectiveness of future electoral and related processes.
- d) Before issuing the media statement and the observation report under this Paragraph the MOG must comply with Paragraph 7(k), and seek a response from the EC and the FEO accordingly.

Paragraph 4: Composition of the Multinational Observer Group

- a) The MOG will include a team of observers to form a single coordinated group, from countries and organisations which are approved by the Fijian Government.

- b) The Fijian Government has invited Australia, India and Indonesia to co-chair and coordinate the MOG, and work with other accredited election observers to establish a single consolidated international observation mission. The co-chairs will be the primary contact point between the MOG and the Fijian Government.
- c) The co-chairs will manage and coordinate the MOG overall, including the allocation of specific delegation members to observe the various aspects of the process as set out above.
- d) The MOG will establish a Secretariat to coordinate logistical support and briefing to the delegation, for the duration of the observation mission.

Paragraph 5: Commitment to Co-operate

The Fijian Government:

- a) Will seek the approval of the FEO, to provide unimpeded access to the MOG to all stages of the election process and all election technologies and the certification processes for voting and other technologies, without requiring the MOG to enter into confidentiality agreements concerning technologies or election processes;
- b) Will facilitate unimpeded access to the MOG to all persons concerned with election processes, including:
 - (i) Electoral officials at all levels subject to the approval of the FEO; and
 - (ii) Members of the Fijian Government whose functions are relevant to organising genuine democratic elections;
- c) Will ensure freedom of movement around the country for all members of the MOG;
- d) Will ensure full, country-wide accreditation (that is, the issuing of any identification or document required to conduct election observation) for all observers who are part of the MOG as long as the MOG complies with the requirements for accreditation; and
- e) Will ensure that no Governmental authority will interfere in the activities of the MOG, or individuals or organisations that provide information to, or support for, the MOG, in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Fiji.

Paragraph 6: Accreditation and Identification of the Multinational Observer Group

a) All countries/organisations who are part of the MOG must submit an application to the Fijian Government for approval which will specify:

- (i) The name of the country/organisation;
- (ii) The photograph, name and nationality of each observer designated by the country/organisation;
- (iii) The intended time of stay in Fiji; and
- (iv) A statement, duly executed by each observer, that they will abide by the laws, regulations, guidelines, this Terms of Reference and the Code of Conduct for the MOG, which is annexed to this Terms of Reference.

b) Upon receipt of the application for approval, along with its accompanying documentation, the Fijian Government will make a decision on the approval of each observer, and, if approved, will request the FEO to issue an official accreditation to the observer.

c) The FEO may (following reasonable consultation with co-leads) revoke the accreditation of any accredited member of the MOG if the organisation or accredited member:

- d) Has failed to adhere to the laws of the Republic of Fiji;
- e) Has failed to adhere to the lawful instruction, direction or order issued by the FEO;
- f) Has shown a bias in the observation of the electoral process;
- g) Has obstructed election officials in the conduct of their official duties; or
- h) Has not adhered to this Terms of Reference or the Code of Conduct for the MOG.

Paragraph 7: Rights and Privileges of the Multinational Observer Group

All accredited observers who are part of the MOG will have the following rights and privileges:

- a) To receive a visa to enter Fiji if this is required;
- b) To enjoy freedom of movement throughout Fiji, without prior permission or notification;
- c) To communicate freely with the Government, political parties, coalitions of parties, independent candidates, non-government organisations, civil societies and other social and political organisations in Fiji;
- d) To seek clarifications from all the organisations involved in the electoral process on matters connected with the activity of the observation of the elections, and to obtain answers in a useful and timely manner;

- e) To observe voter registration activities, voter awareness activities, the vote, the count and the dissemination of election results;
- f) To have access to information transmitted by the EC and FEO and its officers in relation to any complaints regarding the electoral process that may have been registered;
- g) To open offices in Fiji, if so required, to ensure the successful accomplishment of this Terms of Reference;
- h) To observe the participation, as authorised by law, of the political parties or coalitions of parties connected with the electoral process;
- i) To have freedom of access to all polling stations and counting centres at all times, subject to the laws of the Republic of Fiji and any reasonable instruction or directions issued by the FEO;
- j) To have freedom to examine all electoral materials including ballot boxes, ballot papers and indelible ink, which are to be used; and
- k) To communicate according to the provisions of this Terms of Reference and based on the scope of MOG as outlined in Paragraph 1, the findings of the observation to the EC and the FEO and seek a response from the EC and the FEO before making these views public.

Paragraph 8: Commitments

Individual members of the MOG will make the following commitments:

- a) To respect the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji;
- b) To exercise their role with impartiality, independence and objectivity;
- c) To identify themselves immediately, whenever necessary, and at all times to wear or otherwise prominently display the prescribed identification cards issued by the Supervisor of Elections;
- d) To notify election officials of any action or conduct which they believe to be serious infringements of the electoral process;
- e) Not to interfere with, or impede, the normal course of the electoral process;
- f) Not to issue individual statements (including by or on behalf of any person or country) about the electoral process to the media; and

- g) To abide by the annexed Code of Conduct for the MOG.

Paragraph 9: Status of Diplomats

Any Diplomat, who makes an application for approval and accreditation under Paragraph 6 shall perform the functions as set out in this Terms of Reference without prejudice to the provisions of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961.

Paragraph 10: Funding

All countries/organisations, duly approved and accredited under this Terms of Reference, will be wholly responsible for all costs in their observing duties. The Fijian Government, EC and the FEO will not be responsible for any such costs.

This Terms of Reference does not create any legally binding rights or obligations under international law.

Annex B - Code of Conduct for the Multinational Observer Group for 2022 Fijian General Election

ANNEXURE

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE MULTINATIONAL OBSERVER GROUP FOR 2022 FIJIAN GENERAL ELECTION

All observers in the Multinational Observer Group ('MOG') observing the 2022 Fijian General Election must be familiar with and abide by this Code of Conduct.

1. Respect for Sovereignty, Constitution and the Law

The observer must perform his or her functions with:

- (a) Respect for the sovereignty of the Republic of Fiji;
- (b) Respect for and compliance with the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji; and
- (c) Respect for and compliance with the laws of the Republic of Fiji, including the *Electoral Act 2014*, and any direction or instructions issued by the Electoral Commission and the Fijian Elections Office ('FEO').

2. Neutrality

The Observer must:

- (a) Act in a strictly neutral and unbiased manner in relation to national authorities, including the electoral officials, political parties, candidates, voters and the media;
- (b) Avoid any conflict of interest during observation and assessment, and must immediately report to the Fijian Government of any conflict of interest;
- (c) Refrain from accepting any gifts from individuals or organisations;
- (d) Refrain from any action likely to be interpreted as indicating partisan support for any candidate, political party or organisation;
- (e) Refrain from expressing partisan views;
- (f) Exercise the highest level of personal discretion, at all times; and

(g) Refrain from wearing or carrying party or independent candidate symbols.

3. Accuracy and Transparency

The Observer must:

- (a) Obtain a valid view of all aspects of the electoral process relevant to its legitimacy;
- (b) Obtain a valid view of the way the electoral process has progressed in all parts of the country;
- (c) Consult widely with relevant political organisations and members of the Fijian public;
- (d) Take all necessary steps to assure that all information gathered by them and conveyed to others as part of the observation process has a sound factual basis;
- (e) Ensure that all information is collected in a way that is systematic, clear and unambiguous; and
- (f) In respect of any allegations which reflect adversely on the FEO or on a participant in the electoral process, obtain the response of the concerned party before treating such an allegation as valid.

Annex C – Pre-Election Day Statement

Pre-Election Day Statement **FIJI GENERAL ELECTION 2022**

Suva, 13 December 2022

Since the issuance of the Writ for the 2022 General Election on 31 October, the Multinational Observer Group (MOG) has observed all key electoral steps to date and evaluated the Fijian Elections Office (FEO) functions, operations and preparations ahead of Pre-Polling week and Election Day on 14 December.

In summary, the MOG has observed the FEO to be a professional organisation that is well-prepared to deliver a successful General Election in 2022. The MOG notes the Supervisor of Elections' advice that all Fijians who are registered to vote and arrive at their designated polling venue will be able to vote on election day, with or without their updated voter card.

The MOG was provided with full access to observe all steps in the electoral process, including the voter registration process, establishment of National Register of Voters, polling staff training, voter awareness and education, candidate nomination (including appeals and objections), candidate draw, printing and storage of ballots, and pre-poll voting.

The MOG also met with a vast array of stakeholders, such as political parties, civil society, religious groups and all relevant Fijian government institutions. This has included visits and meetings in remote areas of the country across all four divisions.

The MOG assesses that the FEO has continued to improve its processes since the 2018 general election, including having implemented a number of key recommendations from the 2018 MOG report. For example, significant efforts have been made to engage directly with communities regarding voting procedures and to increase the public presence of the FEO as a technically proficient organisation. The MOG welcomes the FEO's recent partnerships to increase voter awareness and information, including among younger voters in remote areas and women. The MOG notes the FEO has also made use of technological aids, such as barcode scanning, to ensure greater security and efficiency in the packing and storing of ballot papers, as well as the ability for voters to text a hotline to confirm their polling station.

The MOG has not observed any irregularities in the electoral steps observed to date or significant issues that would prevent registered voters from casting their ballot during pre polling through postal voting or on Election Day on 14 December. No significant irregularities were observed at the 115 pre-polling venues visited by MOG observers from 5 to 9 December.

But our work does not stop here. The MOG will deploy over 90 observers from 16 countries and two regional organisations (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and Melanesian Spearhead Group)

to observe election day polling. MOG observers will visit every one of the four of Fiji's electoral districts. The MOG will also observe the counting and tallying of the ballots.

Soon after election day, the MOG will release an interim statement outlining our initial observations. A final report will be completed as soon as practical after election day, which will include more detailed observations from stakeholders engaged, an assessment of the electoral processes observed and any recommendations as appropriate.

The MOG strongly encourages all registered Fijian voters to make their voice heard and come out and vote on 14 December.

Annex D – Interim Statement



INTERIM STATEMENT FIJI GENERAL ELECTION 2022 Suva, 16 December 2022

Ahead of Fiji's General Election on 14 December, the Multinational Observer Group (MOG) deployed 90 observers across Fiji. The MOG was comprised of participants from 16 countries and two regional organisations: the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the Melanesian Spearhead Group. The MOG has had unrestricted access to observe all key stages of the electoral process to date. At the time of issuing this Interim Statement, MOG observers are attending the National Count Centre and National Results Centre. In the first quarter of 2023, the MOG will issue a final report, which will include a more detailed assessment of the MOG's observations and recommendations to further strengthen Fiji's election processes.

The Co-Chairs of the MOG are pleased to provide the following Interim Statement.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The MOG did not observe any significant irregularities or issues during PrePolling, postal voting, or Election Day voting. The MOG assesses that Fijian voters were able to exercise their right to vote freely.
- The Fijian Elections Office (FEO) had built upon lessons learnt from delivering the 2014 and 2018 General Elections to improve its administration and operational effectiveness. This included significant efforts to expand voter awareness to support voters in exercising their right to vote.
- The MOG observed the functions and operations of the FEO to be technically proficient and assesses that it was well-prepared to deliver a transparent and credible electoral process in a professional manner.
- Many non-government stakeholders reported their concerns regarding increased restrictions on some previously available formats of election-related activities and discourse ahead of the election.
- Voting took place in a calm, peaceful environment.
- The MOG observed that persons with disabilities were actively assisted to vote during PrePolling and on Election Day.
- Counting proceeded in a systematic, methodical and transparent manner, consistent with the prepublished FEO guidelines.
- On the evening of 14 December, the FEO reported immediately to the MOG an 'anomaly' in its *FEO Results App* presenting provisional vote results, which was rectified.
- The publication of updates on final results has been slower than anticipated, due to additional quality control processes.

About the MOG

The Multinational Observer Group (the MOG) was established at the invitation of the Fijian Government, comprising three co-chair countries, Australia, India and Indonesia. This is the third time the Fijian Government has invited the co-chair countries to establish a MOG to observe the General Election.

The three Co-Chairs were: Ms Rebekha Sharkie MP, representing Australia, Mr Dharmendra Sharma, representing India and HE Ambassador Muhsin Syihab, representing Indonesia. The MOG was comprised of participants from 16 countries and two regional organisations: the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the Melanesian Spearhead Group.

Prior to the Writ for the General Election being issued, the Governments of Fiji, Australia, India and Indonesia agreed to a Terms of Reference (TORs),⁷² which enabled the MOG to have freedom of movement and consultation.⁷³ The TORs also instructed the MOG to observe and evaluate a range of electoral processes and to assess (i) whether the voter processes of the FEO facilitated and assisted Fijian voters to exercise their right to vote freely, and (ii) whether or not the outcome of the election broadly represented the will of all Fijian voters.⁷⁴

Electoral Context

The Constitution of the Republic of Fiji ('the 2013 Constitution') provides the foundation for its electoral system. Following elections in 2014 and 2018, in 2022, Fiji held its third General Election under that system.

Parties and Candidates

The total number of parties and candidates contesting the 2022 General Election was higher than in both 2014 and 2018.

In 2018, there were 235 candidates from six parties and no independent candidates contesting 51 seats. Subsequently in the election cycle, one of the parties was deregistered.

In 2022 there were nine parties, four of which were newly registered, and 342 candidates, including two independents, contesting 55 seats.

Of the 343 candidates contesting the 2022 General Election, 56 were women. This is the same number of women who contested the 2018 General Election. Due to the rise in candidate numbers in 2022, women made up 16.3 percent, when compared with 17.7 percent in 2014 and 24.0 percent in 2018. The MOG notes with concern this proportional reduction in women's participation as candidates when compared to the 2014 and 2018 General Elections. The MOG recognises that a system of government that reflects the diversity of the community, including gender diversity, is a key pillar of democracy (see further, 'Women's Participation' below).

⁷² Signed on 18 October 2022. Available at: <https://www.feo.org.fj/storage/2022/10/TOR-Endorsed-18.10.22.pdf>

⁷³ See Terms of Reference, paragraph 5.

⁷⁴ See Terms of Reference, paragraph 1(h).

The MOG observed that political parties and candidates were able to utilise designated public spaces to campaign. Many non-government stakeholders reported their concerns regarding an increased restriction⁷⁵ on some previously available formats of election-related activities and discourse, such as opinion polling and surveys, research workshops, candidate-development activities, and publishing of private opinion articles.

Voters

In 2022, there were 693,915 registered voters. This was an increase from 2018, when 637,527 people were registered to vote. In 2018, there was a voter turnout of 458,532 (71.92 percent). At the time of issuing this Interim Statement, the FEO had not published any statistics on voter turnout for the 2022 General Election. The Supervisor of Election (SOE) informed the MOG that figures on voter turnout will be published with the final results.

In relation to Pre-Polling, in 2022, there were 77,907 (11.2 percent) registered voters. Of those registered, 54,246 (69.63 percent) turned out to vote. This was slightly higher than in 2018 which saw a turnout of 45,510 (65.6 percent). There were no significant weather events or other impediments to pre-poll voting reported during the 2022 General Election.

As to women's participation, in 2022, there were 345,566 (49.8 percent) women registered to vote, compared to 316,431 (49.63 percent) in 2018. Accordingly, 2022 was the largest number of women voters registered to date.⁷⁶

Legal Framework

The 2013 Constitution establishes the legal framework for the conduct of Fiji's elections, including regular elections based on universal adult (18 years) and nondiscriminatory suffrage, and secret ballot. In these respects, the 2013 Constitution provides a good basis for a general election that complies with fundamental international standards.

Further to the foundation provided in the 2013 Constitution,⁷⁷ Fiji's electoral framework is expanded upon in legislation.⁷⁸ This legislation sets out the roles and responsibilities of the relevant electoral authorities, as well as other bodies in the electoral system such as political parties, candidates, voters and the media.

Fiji has also ratified several international treaties that contain obligations relevant to the electoral process, including the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR), the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD). These international commitments

⁷⁵ In particular, *Electoral Act 2014*, s 115, which was in the Act in 2018, as well as ss 110A and 144A, which are recent amendments.

⁷⁶ All statistics cited above, and throughout this Interim Statement, are subject to final verification at the end of the electoral process.

⁷⁷ See in particular, *Electoral Act 2014*, ss 17-19, 23, 52-59, 66, 75-76.

⁷⁸ Principally: *Electoral Act 2014*, *Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act 2012*, *Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013*, but other acts have been considered throughout the course of the observation process.

provide voters with rights and protections, many of which have been implemented in Fiji's domestic framework.

Since 2018, the *Electoral Act 2014* ('*Electoral Act*'), the *Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act 2014*, the *Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013*, and other related legislation⁷⁹ have been amended on the basis that it would improve the electoral process.

The MOG notes that many non-government stakeholders and members of the public raised concerns in relation to these amendments and their impact on the interaction between the public and electoral authorities.

Electoral Authorities

The legal framework establishes an independent electoral management body headed by an oversight and policy-making body⁸⁰ - the Electoral Commission (EC) - and an executive, operational arm, the Fijian Elections Office (FEO), headed by the SoE.⁸¹

Fijian Elections Office and the Electoral Commission

The MOG had unrestricted access to the FEO and its operations, including briefings on processes and procedures and weekly meetings with FEO staff and the SoE where MOG staff were free to ask questions. Observers were also present during all critical stages of the electoral process, commencing with the issuance of the Writ on 31 October.⁸² Electoral processes covered included candidate registration, nomination, and lodging of appeals, campaign rallies, polling day worker training, the printing, storage and distribution of sensitive materials, Pre-Polling and Election Day across the four divisions, the counting and tallying of votes, and aspects of the information technology (IT) used to support the electoral process.

The MOG examined the FEO's processes and procedures put in place to support the running of the General Election in 2022. The MOG observed that they were robust and had adequate checks and balances to ensure that any irregularities would be detected and mitigated. The MOG also observed the FEO to be open and transparent in its engagements with the MOG and noted a depth of professionalism within the FEO structure, with an emphasis on the empowerment of officers, including women.

In 2017, amendments to the *Electoral Act*, which made the SoE the Secretary to the EC,⁸³ were designed to create greater coordination between the two components of Fiji's electoral management body. Although this model aligns with international standards, and greater coordination between the EC and FEO had been commended,⁸⁴ in 2022, various stakeholders reported to the MOG that this change created the perception of a lack of separation of powers

⁷⁹ Such as the *Births, Deaths and Marriages Act 1975*, and the *Interpretation Act 1967*.

⁸⁰ *Electoral Act*, s 3.

⁸¹ *Electoral Act*, s 6.

⁸² Writ for Election, published in Government of Fiji Gazette, Vol. 23, No. 129 (31 October 2022).

⁸³ *Electoral Act*, s, 5(7).

⁸⁴ See 2018 Final Report of the Multinational Observer Group, p. 14.

between the EC and FEO. Furthermore, they reported that this perception had contributed to a disconnect between the public and electoral authorities. The MOG notes that the appeal procedure for the EC was utilised in 2022 in relation to candidate nominations: of the ten appeals lodged, one appeal was upheld.⁸⁵

Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption

In addition to the electoral management body, the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption (FICAC) plays a significant role in supporting the integrity of Fiji's electoral framework. Noting the *Electoral Act* creates several electoral offences, FICAC is directed to investigate and prosecute 'any offence of corrupt or illegal conduct pertaining to any election'.⁸⁶ At the time of issuing this Interim Statement, the MOG noted that during the 2022 campaign period, FICAC received 60 complaints, seven cases were taken to court, seven cases were closed and 46 cases were under investigation.⁸⁷ Overall, the MOG observed FICAC to be a professional institution that sought to conduct its functions in the public interest.

Voter Register

The EC has responsibility for the registration of voters.⁸⁸ Voter registration for the 2022 General Election closed on 31 October at 6 pm, as specified in the Writ.⁸⁹ In total, there were 693,915 registered voters, including 77,907 Pre-Poll and 9,448 overseas voters. This was the highest number of voters registered to vote in a general election in Fiji's history.

The FEO has continued to maintain the voter register to a high standard. This includes a range of initiatives and awareness campaigns that support Fijians to update their personal information efficiently and effectively. To bolster the integrity of the voter register, during an election year the FEO cleanses the data against the birth, deaths and marriages register monthly to mitigate the chance of deceased voters being included. This is done biannually outside of the election year.

Voter Awareness and Information

Partnerships

The 2018 MOG report recommended the FEO focus on voter awareness and an expansion of partnerships, including with civil society organisations (CSOs). The MOG welcomes the FEO's recent expansion of its partnerships, including with the United Nations Development Programme, to increase voter awareness, including in remote areas, with young voters and women. This includes the rollout of the *Know Your Election* campaign across all four divisions. The FEO also

⁸⁵ *Electoral Act*, s 31.

⁸⁶ *Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 2007*, s 2A(c).

⁸⁷ See for example: <https://www.fijitimes.com/2022-bgeneral-election-elections-office-refers-duo-to-ficac/>; <https://www.feo.org.fj/national-federation-party-referred-to-ficac/>; <https://www.fijitimes.com/flp-refer-fijifirst-to-ficac-for-breach-of-electoral-act/>; <https://www.fijitimes.com/2022-general-election-fijifirst-party-candidate-oconnor-fronts-court/>.

⁸⁸ *Electoral Act*, s 3(1)(a).

⁸⁹ *Electoral Act*, s 19; Writ for Election, published in Government of Fiji Gazette, Vol. 23, No. 129 (31 October 2022).

published a 2022 election information booklet in six languages. During the electoral cycle, the FEO implemented programs with the Ministry of Education to include civic education for high school students.

The FEO significantly increased its engagement with grass-roots organisations who have strong community links, having engaged over 180 organisations. This was a shift in approach from 2018 where the FEO engaged larger CSOs, including those that deliver civic education to communities while also engaging in policy formulation and advocacy.

The MOG commends the FEO for its efforts to expand its engagement with voters at all levels of the community. However, CSOs reported their concerns having been excluded from the electoral process given their traditional role in civic education. The MOG notes that these CSOs traditionally deliver education and awareness initiatives that go beyond the voting process to include education on broader matters such as human rights, gender and strengthening democracy. The MOG notes that active participation of civil society in election-related activities, including using civil society as domestic observers and engaging with civil society as stakeholders, is a component of a healthy democracy (see further 'Inclusiveness and Participation in the Electoral Process' below).

Voter Cards

Prior to the 2022 election, the FEO introduced a new voter card which included the name of the polling venue where the voter must cast their vote. This was a direct response to an issue raised during the 2018 General Election when a cohort of voters were unable to vote because they attended the wrong polling station. In 2022, the MOG observed that there were a small number of voters that attended the incorrect polling station, but of the polling stations observed, this error in attendance was not systemic. The MOG also noted that in the majority of these instances, FEO officials were able to assist voters to find their correct polling station by texting the FEO hotline.

The MOG understands that 90 percent of voters changed over to the new card. The new card is not required to vote; a point that was not well-understood or communicated in the lead up to PrePolling. During Pre-Polling, the MOG observed that voters without identification were able to vote after identifying themselves to the Presiding Officer at their designated polling station. The MOG welcomes the FEO's subsequent efforts to clarify this fact closer to the election.

Use of Government Resources during the Campaign

A criticism from the 2018 General Election was a lack of laws, guidance or conventions regarding the conduct of Ministers, Members of Parliament and the bureaucracy once Parliament is dissolved ahead of a general election. In 2022, many non-government stakeholders again raised this criticism with the MOG as an ongoing key concern that directly impacts on public confidence in the electoral process. Many non-government stakeholders told the MOG that this gave any incumbent government an unfair political advantage in elections by allowing them to announce and implement government programs during the campaign period.

The 2018 MOG report recommended the Fijian Government introduce guidelines to foster a greater level of public confidence in the electoral process. The MOG observed the limited changes made to the *Electoral Act* in 2021 which prohibits the use of government vehicles to conduct campaign activities.⁹⁰

Inclusiveness and Participation in the Electoral Process

Domestic Observers

The Minister for Elections has the power to invite domestic observers to take part in a general election.⁹¹ The MOG noted that there were no domestic observers invited in 2022 or public notice that would both encourage and support applications from domestic observers. Fijian civil society representatives have expressed to the MOG a strong interest in observing this and future general elections.

Women's Participation

A key concern raised with the MOG was the September 2021 amendment to the *Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act 2012* which required individuals to register to vote using their name as specified on their birth certificate. Many non-governments stakeholders, including the public, criticised this amendment as adversely affecting women and iTaukei, who frequently use names that differ from that used on their birth certificate.

Without further disaggregated statistics on voter turnout and the voter register, the MOG cannot assess the impact of the amendment. However, stakeholders raised concerns that the amendment had not been subject to sufficient consultation contributing to declining trust and confusion amongst some communities. The MOG is aware that this amendment is currently the subject of constitutional challenge.

In relation to women's participation as officials in the electoral process, the MOG commends the high proportion of women in leadership roles within the FEO. Of the polling stations visited by observers, during Pre-Polling and Election Day, at the time of issuing this Interim Statement, the MOG observed that 73.79 percent of polling day workers were women, and 67.54 percent of Presiding Officers were women.

Participation by voters with a disability

The MOG appreciates that electoral authorities have continued to make significant efforts to engage with organisations representing persons with disabilities to enable assisted voting. The MOG welcomes amendments to the *Electoral Act* in this regard.⁹²

⁹⁰ See *Electoral Act*, s 113(4A).

⁹¹ See *Electoral Act*, s 119.

⁹² See *Electoral Act*, ss 53 and 57.

The MOG commends the intention of the Elections Disability Access Working Group (EDAWG) to continue to meet after the 2022 General Election, rather than disbanding and regrouping ahead of the next General Election, so that disability-related issues can be improved iteratively. The MOG observed that persons with disabilities were assisted to vote during PrePolling and on Election Day, including voter materials being available in braille.⁹³ However, noting the challenging locations in which many polling stations were located, of the polling station visited, at the time of issuing this Interim Statement, MOG observer teams rated 66.28 percent of Pre-Polling and Election Day polling stations as having adequate infrastructure to support independent access for persons with disabilities. Where infrastructure was not adequate, the MOG welcomes that persons with disabilities were assisted to vote outside of the pre-polling and polling stations.⁹⁴

Media Coverage of the Electoral Process

Fiji's media reported widely and relatively comprehensively on the electoral campaign, and hosted debates and interviews with a range of candidates from all political parties on radio, television, and social media. Despite a relatively robust industry, many media stakeholders told the MOG that the environment in 2022 was more restrictive than in 2018. Stakeholders said that this had led to a culture of self-censorship amongst journalists due to severe consequences of statutory default.⁹⁵ Stakeholders also noted the onerous requirements for publishing opinion polls, which resulted in no polls being published since these requirements were legislated in August 2022.⁹⁶

The *Media Industry Development Act 2010* establishes the Media Industry Development Authority (MIDA),⁹⁷ as well as the Media Tribunal to, *inter alia*, hear and determine complaints referred to by MIDA and to adjudicate breaches of media codes.⁹⁸ Although legislatively remaining a body, the MOG observed that the status of MIDA and the Media Tribunal had changed considerably since the 2018 election. The MOG was advised that MIDA no longer has any full-time staff and nor performs the functions prescribed to it under the Act. The MOG also observed that the FEO had taken over some roles that it had previously shared with the MIDA, such as media accreditations, and had taken on a monitoring role, such as requesting the media issue retractions or corrections using the newly created offence on 'publication of false statements'.⁹⁹

Pre-Polling, Postal Voting and Election Day

Voting during Pre-Polling and on Election Day took place in a calm and peaceful environment in which Fiji's police performed their duties diligently and voters demonstrated commitment, often

⁹³ See *Electoral Act*, s 43(4), which requires that 'facilities provided at a polling station where practicable must be reasonably equipped and designed to enable persons with disabilities or other special needs to cast their vote'.

⁹⁴ In accordance with *Electoral Act*, ss 53 and 57.

⁹⁵ For example, under the *Electoral Act*, contravention of the media blackout laws (s 118) carries a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment, and commission of the offence of 'publication of false statements' (s 144A) carries a maximum penalty of \$50,000, 5 years imprisonment, or both.

⁹⁶ See *Bill No. 49 of 2022*.

⁹⁷ To, *inter alia*, 'encourage, promote and facilitate the development of media organisations and media services in Fiji...[and] ensure that nothing is included in the content of any media service which is against public interest or order, or national interest, or which offends against good taste and decency and creates communal discord'. See *Media Industry Development Act 2010*, s 8.

⁹⁸ *Media Industry Development Act 2010*, s 50.

⁹⁹ *Electoral Act*, s 144A.

queuing in heat, wind and rain. The MOG observed polling station staff to be competent, courteous, and well-prepared.

Pre-Polling

Pre-Polling provided residents of nursing homes or health care facilities, members of the disciplined forces, those under pre-trial detention or serving a sentence of imprisonment, and those living in remote areas with the opportunity to vote. The MOG acknowledges the geographical and environmental challenges associated with delivering Pre-Polling in Fiji, particularly in remote areas. The MOG commends the FEO on their efforts to support all members of the community in exercising their right to vote.

From 5 to 9 December, the MOG observed Pre-Polling across Fiji's four divisions and visited 115 pre-polling stations. The MOG visited polling stations unannounced and had unrestricted access to conduct their observations. The MOG observed the FEO to be well prepared to deliver pre-polling services.

Most pre-polling stations respected the published times for opening. The MOG welcomes the FEO's decision to extend the time to vote in certain areas to support students who were finishing exams. Pre-poll teams and Fiji Police secured ballot boxes and adhered to ballot box seal and transfer processes. The MOG also witnessed the packing of sensitive materials for Pre-Polling at the FEO Central Warehouse and the checking of materials by the corresponding Presiding Officers on arrival at polling stations. The MOG did not observe any campaigning at pre-polling stations. The overall conduct of Pre-Polling was rated as 'very good' (76.39 percent) and 'good' (23.61 percent) by MOG observer teams.

Postal Voting

The MOG notes the FEO supported voters to exercise their right to vote in the 2022 General Election via postal ballot. In particular, the MOG notes overseas registrations were facilitated by Fiji missions abroad who received training from the FEO in delivering voter services. Voter awareness efforts included an overseas registration drive which saw FEO representatives deliver a schedule of in-person awareness sessions to support overseas voters. Overseas voters who happened to be in Fiji, and who had not applied for postal voting, could vote at a designated polling station in Suva. The 2022 General Election was the first time this option was available to individuals registered as overseas voters but were in Suva on Election Day.

Election Day

The MOG deployed 90 observers across Fiji's four divisions. The observers visited over 450 polling stations. As with Pre-Polling, the MOG visited polling stations unannounced and had unrestricted access to conduct their observations. Of the polling procedures observed, no significant irregularities or impediments were noted. The MOG also notes that staff were welltrained and resourced to undertake their duties. The MOG did not observe any campaigning

at or around polling venues. At the time of issuing this Interim Statement, MOG observer teams rated the overall administration of polling stations on Election Day as very good (70.91 percent) and good (28.81 percent).

The MOG notes there were late changes to the location of some polling stations on Election Day due to *force majeure*. These changes were published widely, including on the FEO website, via local news and on social media which seemed to mitigate any potential impact on voters. The MOG is aware of criticism from some civil society members that these changes had not been communicated as effectively, especially outside urban centres. In many locations, the FEO provided free public transport to assist voters to get to polling stations.

Overall, the MOG observed that voting took place in a calm and peaceful environment in which Fiji's police performed their duties diligently and voters demonstrated commitment, often queuing in heat, wind, and rain.

Counting and Tabulation of Results

Counting on Election Day took place at polling stations, immediately after closing. The count was observed and signed off, as required. The results were then communicated to the National Results Centre in Suva via phone and mobile application¹⁰⁰ to enable provisional results to be published. Hard copies of the protocol of results were placed into a tamper evident envelope at each polling station and then transported to the Central Processing Centre in Suva, from which they were dispatched to the National Results Centre. Pre-poll and postal votes were counted at the National Count Centre in Suva and then the overall tabulation of votes was conducted at the National Results Centre in Suva.

As at the time of issuing this Interim Statement, MOG observers were recorded as being present for the counting of votes at 44 polling stations on Election Day, and during the counting of pre-poll and postal voting at the National Count Centre. The MOG had a continued presence for the tabulation of results at the National Results Centre from its commencement, at 6pm on Election Day. The MOG observed that the FEO's procedures were followed with no significant irregularities noted. Counting proceeded in a systematic, methodical and transparent manner. The MOG observed that the results tallying processes were designed appropriately and had sufficient safeguards to verify the protocol of results before figures were entered into the Results Management Information System (RMiS).

The MOG notes that the *FEO Results App* was taken offline on the evening of 14 December, due to an 'anomaly' in the data.¹⁰¹ The MOG was notified immediately, and MOG observers attended the National Results Centre and were briefed by the SoE and their IT staff. The error was resolved, and the *FEO Results App* was restored after approximately four hours with corrected data.

¹⁰⁰ Named the 'My Polling Assistant App'.

¹⁰¹ The *FEO Results App* provides a means for provisional and final results to be published. The incident referred above occurred while provisional results were being published, as required under the *Electoral Act*, s 102A.

Following this event, several political parties expressed concerns. The MOG notes that the *FEO Results App* is not used to count votes, but only to publish results. Election Day votes are tabulated and counted manually at polling stations and pre-poll, postal and recount votes are counted manually at the National Count Centre, as required. The MOG observed that the tabulation process is robust with appropriate quality assurance processes.

The MOG notes that the periodic publication of final results has initially been slower than anticipated, based on the publication of results every 6 hours in 2014 and 2018. The MOG understands that the delay has been due to additional quality control processes that were implemented after the 'anomaly' that occurred in relation to the *FEO Results App*.

The MOG congratulates the FEO, in particular the polling day workers, for their professionalism and commitment to provide voters with the opportunity to express their political will. The MOG also congratulates the people of Fiji for taking steps to further advance their electoral democracy.

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