



Tertiary **Scholarships**
& **Loans** Service
Empowering Fiji's Future



INCREASED PUBLIC ACCESS



INNOVATIVE POLICIES



PARTNERSHIP



EMPOWERING FIJI'S FUTURE



AWARENESS WORKSHOP



NATIONWIDE SCHOOL VISIT

2024

GARLAND OF ACHIEVEMENTS

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CEO's Message



Dr. Hasmukh Lal

As we reflect on 2024, it is with immense pride that I highlight the remarkable achievements of the Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Service (TSLS) in advancing and widening access to tertiary education to empower Fiji's future. The year has been defined by strategic transformation, innovation, and new partnerships, reinforcing our commitment to develop demand-driven human capital development.

In 2024, TSLS expanded scholarships and grants with a record \$150.5 million allocation, funding 10,830 new and 9,940 continuing students. New schemes improved accessibility, and financial support was extended to private students under Hardship.

Achievements of 2024 are as follows:

- Key partnerships with University of the New South Wales, Western Sydney University, and Queensland University of Technology created cost-sharing PhD scholarships, while engagements with Australian universities expanded study opportunities and other universities.
- Service delivery improved with a revamped website, the Sponsorship Information Management System (SIMS), and the opening of the TSLS Nadi Office, enhancing student support.
- Industry ties strengthened through the Graduate Business Start-Up Grant Scheme, presentations on various media platforms and in industry forums.
- Nationwide awareness campaigns ensured students in urban, rural, and maritime areas accessed funding opportunities, with outreach at major festivals and community events. Bonding and employability policies were enhanced to strengthen Fiji's workforce.

TSLS remains committed to empowering Fiji's future through accessible education, strategic partnerships, and innovation.

Our 2025-2030 Strategic Plan will continue to drive innovation, inclusion, and quality service delivery in tertiary education. With a focus on customer service excellence, ICT transformation, governance, and compliance, we are committed to building a robust education ecosystem that aligns with national development priorities.

These successes are a testament to the dedication of the Government, Board, Team TSLS and our valued stakeholders.

1. Grant Award - Government Incentive Apprenticeship Training Grant Award Event

1st March 2024 - The Minister for Employment, Productivity & Industrial Relations, Honourable Agni Deo Singh was the Chief Guest at the Tertiary Scholarships & Loans Service (TSLS) and Fiji National University co-jointly facilitated Government Incentive Apprenticeship Training Grant Award Event at the TSLS Head Quarters in Garden City.



Mr. Nilesh Lal (Board Chair), Dr. Hasmukh Lal (CEO, TSLS), Dr. Emi (Deputy Board Chair), Honourable Minister Agni Deo Singh

2. Policy Change - Salary Increment

13th March 2024 - As part of the 2024-2025 Financial Year, TSLS staff increment was implemented to recognize and reward employee contributions. This adjustment reflects the organization's commitment to valuing its workforce, improving job satisfaction, and fostering a motivated team.

3. Agreement - TSLS & Vodafone

4th April 2024 - The Tertiary Scholarships & Loans Service (TSLS) and Vodafone have renewed the Agreement on Provision of M-PAiSA Service to the TSLS sponsored and funded students at the TSLS Headquarters in Garden City, Suva.



Chief Executive Officer of TSLS, Dr. Hasmukh Lal & Head of eCommerce & Digital Financial Services for Vodafone Fiji, Mr. Shailendra Prasad.

4. Stakeholder Engagement - Labasa Business Forum Presentation

18th May 2024 - Dr. Lal did a presentation on Driving Prosperity: TSLS's Role in Northern Economic Growth," that outlined the impact of the Tertiary Scholarship and Loans Service (TSLS) on education and economic development in the Northern Division. The presentation covered the following topics:

- **Macro Data & Investments:** Since 2014, TSLS has supported 68,556 students, with 29,471 graduates, investing a total of \$1.1 billion in scholarships, loans, and grants.
- **Scholarship Schemes & Benefits:** Various merit-based, skills-based, and hardship assistance scholarships, along with study loans and in-service schemes.
- **Bond Service:** Terms of service for scholarship recipients, including work commitments.
- **Support in the Northern Division:** Statistics on sponsored students, investments in local campuses, and current active student numbers.
- **TSLS Initiatives:** Learning support, industry mentoring, post-graduation care, employer connections, expanded training providers and innovative study schemes.



5. Widening Public Access - Opening of TSLS Nadi Office

30th May 2024 - The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Planning & Development, Hon. Professor Biman Prasad, successfully conducted the opening of the TSLS Nadi office.



Deputy Prime Minister & Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Planning & Development, Hon. Professor Biman Prasad with the TSLS Board Chairperson, Ms. Ro Teimumu Kepa and Chief Executive Officer of TSLS, Dr. Hasmukh Lal



TSLS Nadi Office Opening Event

6. Launch of TSLS Revamped Website

30th May 2024 - The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Planning & Development, Hon. Professor Biman Prasad, successfully launched the revamped TSLS website.



Click the link to view the revamped website launch video:
<https://youtu.be/tNgvPVXe9TA?si=OTRLvKawALavDG0c>

7. Launch of Sponsorship Information Management System (SIMS)

30th May 2024 - The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Planning & Development, Hon. Professor Biman Prasad, successfully launched the newly in-house developed Sponsorship Information Management System.



Click the link to view the Phase 1 of SIMS launch video:
<https://youtu.be/6yYDHKb5ZYU>

8. Memorandum of Understanding - TSLS & University of New Castle

3rd July 2024 - The Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Service (TSLS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the University of Newcastle (UON) at TSLS Headquarters.

This strategic partnership aims to foster collaboration for joint funding of the PhD programmes for Fiji citizens enrolling at the university.



TSLS Board Chairperson Ms. Ro Teimumu Kepa with the University of Newcastle's Vice Chancellor, Professor Alex Zelinsky during the signing of the MoU

9. Communication and Awareness Plan

25th June 2024 - The Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Service (TSLS) Communications and Awareness Plan (CAP) outlined the plan that will be conveyed to TSLS stakeholders and clients.

It establishes communication and awareness objectives, activities, and methods, as well as periods and timetables for critical awareness activities.

The TSLS Communications and Awareness Plan will deliver:

- The communications and awareness objectives
- How those objectives will be accomplished
- The timeframes and effort involved
- How TSLS will measure success
- Budget associated to each activity

The CAP will be critical because Communications and Awareness are key components of the TSLS strategic plan and is important to the success of awareness campaigns, events, and engagements with stakeholders at all levels. The CAP is intended to raise widespread awareness about the scholarship programmes approved by the coalition government.

10. Budget Announcement

31st July 2024 - In 2024-2025 financial year, the Coalition Government allocated **\$150.5 million** to fund **10,830 new** and **9,940 continuing students**. This allocation is the highest ever for new intakes. We are adding value to existing schemes either through increased allocations or revising eligibility criteria. The scholarship policies are focused on replacing the loss of skills through migration and meet the demand driven skill sets required by our employers.

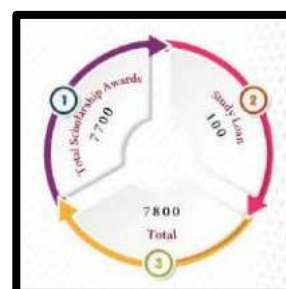


Also, a number of policy changes were announced in the 2024-2025 Budget by the Coalition Government. The changes include:

- Reinstatement of penalty for not serving the required bond period. The penalty is minimum of 10% and the maximum of 50%. The penalty has been reintroduced to discourage graduates from making payment arrangements on bond repayment. Instead, they are encouraged to provide the required service to the country.
- Increase of bond service requirement for students on overseas scholarships from 1.5 times the duration of study to 2.5 times the duration of study.
- No more repayment arrangement for graduates to work and repay from overseas. Those graduates who do not wish to complete the required bond service are required to repay the remaining balance with penalty. They can make arrangements with their overseas employer to clear full payment and graduates can repay to their overseas employer.

11. New Schemes Announcement

31st July 2024 - In 2024-2025 national budget, the number of scholarship and grant schemes have increased, and this shows innovative thinking to allow more access to students to pursue tertiary studies. This is the progressive steps taken by the Coalition Government towards 2030 Sustainable Development Goal on Quality Education. The diversified schemes allow greater inclusivity, equity and access to potential recipients for studies in the national priority areas. Government will assist private students from second year onwards for degree and diploma level five (5) programmes. The private students need to have 50% pass rate in the first year. This assistance will cover tuition fee and \$2000 allowance.



TSLS through the Coalition Government, offers the following:

- **12 schemes of scholarships:** 7,700 Total Scholarship Awards
- **3 schemes of study grants:** 3,030 Total Grants
- **1 study loan scheme:** 100 Total Study Loans

These programmes are designed to support Fiji citizens in pursuing tertiary and skills education.

12. Launch of the 2025 Community Awareness Scholarship Handbook and Key Stakeholders Awareness Workshop

2nd August 2024 - The Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Service (TSLS) successfully launched its 2025 Community Awareness Scholarship Handbook during the Key Stakeholders Awareness Workshop at Holiday Inn.

The launch was done by the Minister for Education, Hon. Aseri Radrodro. The Handbook is designed to provide useful information to all prospective recipients and members of the public on twelve (12) schemes of scholarships, one (1) study loan scheme, and three (3) schemes of study grants.



Minister for Education, Hon. Aseri Radrodro, Board Chairperson & CEO of TSLS with future recipients of scholarships.

Click here to view the launch video: <https://youtu.be/kfZ454EzecM>

13. 2025 – 2030 Strategic Plan Development Timeline

14th August 2024 - Considering our organization's aim to innovate practices and expand access to tertiary education, this Strategic Development Plan was established with a proposal of two options: a 5-year plan which provides a structured long-term approach or a rolling strategic plan to allow for flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances. This strategic plan is designed to guide our initiatives, enhance operational excellence, and ultimately contribute to the development of human capital in Fiji.

14. Careers Teachers & Student Representative Scholarship Awareness Workshop

The Principals, Careers Teachers and Student Representative Awareness Workshop was officially opened by the Honourable Minister for Education, Aseri Radrodoro on 21st August 2024 at Swami Vivekananda College in Nadi for schools in Sigatoka, Nadi and Lautoka followed by the similar awareness workshop at Tavua college on 22nd August 2024 for schools in Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki and for the Central Division schools at Saint Joseph Secondary School on 11th September 2024. For Vanua Levu schools, same workshop concluded on 13th September 2024.



15. Parliament Debate - Response to Hon. Alipate Tuicolo from Hon. Minister for Education, Aseri Radrodoro



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

HON. ASERI RADRODRO

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

MONDAY 5 AUGUST 2024

10/8/2024

WRITTEN QUESTION

Hon. Alipate Tuicolo to ask the Minister for Education – Since the establishment of the Tertiary Scholarship and Loans Service (TSLS) in 2023, can the Minister inform Parliament on –

- the number of students that have enrolled under the TSLS in the respective Higher Education institutions;
- the number of students enrolled under the TSLS that did not complete their studies in the respective Higher Education institutions; and
- the number of students enrolled under the TSLS in each Higher Education institution that have been absorbed into the workforce.

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The Coalition Government continues to recognise the significance of education at different levels from primary to tertiary-level education. Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Service (TSLS) was established in 2014 with the core mandate to administer Government scholarships, grants and study loans.

TSLS plays a critical role as the major stakeholder for human capital development in the country by providing highly trained and competent workforce to sustain our economy.

(a) the number of students that have enrolled under the TSLS in the respective Higher Education institutions.

Since 2014, seventy thousand nine hundred and four students (70,904) students have been funded through scholarships, study loans, micro qualifications grants and apprenticeship scheme. This amounts to total financial investment of \$1.1 Billion.

A total of 68,700 students have been funded by TSLS through Scholarships, Study Loans and Grants at 19 local Tertiary Education Institutes (TEI's) and 18 Institutions in Australia and New Zealand.

In addition, 1,879 students have been assisted through Micro Qualification Grant and 325 students under Apprenticeship Scheme.

TSLS scholarships, Study Loans and Grants

The breakdown of the 68,700 students funded under scholarships, study loans and grants are:

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Higher Education Institution	Number of Students
The University of the South Pacific	20,610
Fiji National University	30,226
University of Fiji	3,110
Corpus Christi Teachers College	358
Fulton Adventist University College	551
Sangam Institute of Nursing	1,223
Technical College of Fiji	10,857
Centre for Applied Technology Development	151
Keshava Business Education Institute	32
Pacific Polytechnic	1,194
Monfort Boys Town	15
Navuno Agricultural Technical Institute	10
Service Pro	10
SPA Academy Fiji	14
Pivot Point	57
Vishnu Infotech	56
Advance Aviation Training (Fiji) Limited	36
Pacific Flying School	36
Auckland University of Technology	5
Massey University	6

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The University of Auckland	5
Monash University	14
Queensland University of Technology	2
University of Newcastle	10
University of New South Wales	9
Swinburne University of Technology	4
University of Sydney	2
Western Sydney University	12
University of Waikato	3
University of Canterbury	1
Victoria University of Wellington	5
University of Canberra	1
Macquarie University	2
Royal Melbourne Institution Of Technology	1
The University of Queensland	4
University of Technology Sydney	1
Overseas Domestic Funded	67
Total	68,700

Micro Qualifications Grant

A total of 1,879 students have been assisted with Micro Qualifications Grant at the following Tertiary Education Institutes:

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Tertiary Education Institute	Number of Students
Pacific Polytechnic	1332
Service Pro	53
Fiji National University	69
Waidina College	41
Nasesevin Secondary School	19
VISHAN INFOTECH	125
CATD	163
Draua Secondary Vocational Centre	6
Keshab Business Education Institute	6
Makoi Womens Vocational Training	4
Tavua College Vocational Centre	5
Levuka Public School	6
Nodavivatu High School	10
Naitasiri Secondary School	40
Total	1879

Incentive Apprenticeship Scheme

The 325 students who are assisted under Incentive Apprenticeship Scheme are with the following Employers:

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Employer	Number of Students
Lincoln Refrigeration Pte Ltd	4
Energy Fiji Ltd	107
Matec Motors	1
Asco Motors	5
Fiji Sugar Corporation Limited	103
Shreedhar Motors	1
Altitude Refrigerations Solutions	3
Aquaheat South Pacific	18
Ba Industries Limited	2
Vatukoula Goldmines Limited	14
Nation Electric	1
Niranjans Autoport Ltd	7
Carpenters Fiji Ltd	15
Kooltech Refrigeration	1
Compressed Air & Pneumatic Services	1
Wormald Fire & Security	4
Mechanical Services	6
Goodman Fielder	13
Tropic Woods	11
Fiji Ships & Heavy Industries Ltd	3

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Hilton Fiji Beach Resort & Spa	3
Future Farms Pte Ltd T/A rooster Poultry	2
Total	325

(b) the number of students enrolled under the TSLS that did not complete their studies in the respective Higher Education institutions.

From 2014 to 2023 there were 21,685 students who have either absconded, are inactive or are yet to graduate and their Bond term has expired. This equates to approximately \$160 million dollars of investment.

The breakdown by Institution cannot be released as it will cause reputational damage to the Tertiary Education Institutions. However, the institutions have the information on probation, suspension and non-completion.

Students were provided with a TSLS loan from 2014 to 2019 with very low marks to do degree programmes which contributed to such high non-completion. The Technical Colleges also attributed to the non-completion figures.

The Fijian Parliament has approved amendments to the TSLS Act to obtain academically 'at risk' student information. The information is to be used to subsequently prepare remedial plans for their tertiary education institutions to early detect and provide scaffolding support to reduce the non-completion rate.

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(c) the final question is: the number of students enrolled under the TSLS in each Higher Education institution that have been absorbed into the workforce.

The Higher Education Commission Fiji (HECF) and Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Service (TSLS) have no legal mandate to collect employment records of the graduates. Due to this there are no records on where the graduates who benefited from Government funding are employed.

However, with amendments to the TSLS Act, Bill No. 16 of 2024 and Act No. 12 of 2024, TSLS now has the mandate to collect student employment record.

Section 17A of TSLS Act requires "A student or former student who is employed or self-employed, must provide the Service with his or her employment record".

All TSLS funded students are now obligated to submit the employment record to TSLS within 6 months of being employed or self-employed and any other time as directed by TSLS.

With this requirement, it will not only allow TSLS to keep track of where students are employed but also assist in bond clearance process and national planning.

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TS&S will strengthen the policies, regulations and the Act to ensure transparent and accountable management of government funding, to maximize return from taxpayer investment in education.

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Click here to view the response: [KM_554e-20240805044035 \(parliament.gov.fj\)](https://parliament.gov.fj/KM_554e-20240805044035)

16. Hibiscus Festival and Festival of the Friendly North

31st August to 7th September 2024 - TSLS had a booth at the Hibiscus Festival and Festival of the Friendly North simultaneously, creating more awareness about the Fiji Government Scholarships.



Hibiscus Booth



Festival of the Friendly North

17. TSLS Delegation Visited Partnered Universities in Auckland

5th September 2024 to 6th September 2024 - The Tertiary Scholarships & Loans Service Chief Executive Officer Dr. Hasmukh Lal, Head of Student Services Avinay Kumar and Coordinator Shahita Chand visited the Auckland University of Technology and University of Auckland & its sponsored students, as part of its Annual visitation to their partner universities.

These visits are integral to strengthening our long-standing partnership and advancing our commitment to achieving demand-driven human capital development outcomes for Fiji. The purpose of the visit was also to discuss the expansion of our existing scholarship agreement, with a specific emphasis on addressing Fiji's need for enhanced human resource capacity through postgraduate education and research initiatives.



Auckland University of Technology



University of Auckland



Massey University



Waikato University

18. Memorandum of Understanding - TSLS & Fiji Commerce & Employers Federation (FCEF)

12th September 2024 - The Tertiary Scholarships & Loans Service (TSLS) and the Fiji Commerce & Employers Federation (FCEF) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the implementation of the Graduate Business Start-Up Grant Scheme.

The Fiji Government approved this scheme in its 2024-2025 National Budget with allocation of \$300,000, to be administered by TSLS and implemented by FCEF.

This MoU facilitates a strategic public-private partnership with FCEF that will for the first-time support those graduating from tertiary education institutions to become entrepreneurs and job creators.



CEO TSLS, Dr. Lal & the President of FCEF, Mr. Vinay Narsey.

19. Stakeholder Engagement – Fiji Medical Association

14th September 2024 - TSLS sponsored the Class Reunion Award and the Most Engaged Attendee Award for the Fiji Medical Association. The awards were presented by the Head of Finance & Corporate Services, Mr. Selveen Deo and Communications and Awareness Officer, Ms. Shafia Sharif of TSLS at the Annual Conference at the Hilton Resort in Denarau, Nadi.



Fiji Medical Association Awards Night

20. TSLS Delegation Visited Partnered Universities in Australia

16th September 2024 to 17th September 2024 - Chief Executive Officer of the Tertiary Scholarships & Loans Service (TSLS) Dr. Hasmukh Lal and Coordinator of Overseas Scholarships Shahita Chand, visited several prestigious universities in Australia, including Monash University, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), The University of Melbourne and Swinburne University of Technology, as part of TSLS's annual engagement, they also met with Fijian students sponsored by the service.

These visits play a vital role in strengthening TSLS's partnerships and advancing its mission to develop demand-driven human capital for Fiji. The discussions centred on expanding current scholarship agreements, particularly in the areas of postgraduate education and research, to meet Fiji's need for enhanced human resource capacity. The visit also explored opportunities for new partnerships with additional universities, supporting Fiji's broader goals in education and research development.



Monash University



Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology



Melbourne University



Swinburne University

21. Annual Scholarship Awareness – School Visits

17th September to 30th October 2024 - The Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Service (TSLS) commenced its nationwide school visits as part of its Annual Scholarship Awareness Event.

TSLS has outreached schools across the Central, Western and Northern Divisions, including rural and maritime areas, covering Year 12 and Year 13 students, to inform them on the various schemes of Government scholarship.

The awareness drive focused on the announcement of the new schemes and its eligibility criteria and the use of online application portal for new students' applications for 2025 Academic Year.



TSLS staff with Year 12 & Year 13 students

22. Education Minister and TSLS Delegation Expands Partnerships with the University of New South Wales (UNSW)

18th September 2024 - TSLS expanded its partnership with UNSW by endorsing the cost sharing PhD agreement.

The agreement was signed by the CEO of TSLS and Head of International of University of the New South Wales. Through the cost sharing agreement, UNSW will cover tuition fee for one PhD student for every 5 undergraduate TSLS sponsored students commencing their studies at UNSW.



Minister for Education, Hon. Aseri Radrodro, Chief Executive Officer of TSLS, Dr. Hasmukh Lal and Head of International of University of New South Wales, Mr Peter Ryan.

23. TSLS Expands Agreement with Western Sydney University (WSU)

18th September 2024 - The Coalition Government introduced a new scheme in the current Financial Year to have more Fiji citizens to access PhD scholarships to boost Fiji's human capital.

Western Sydney University came on board with an addendum to the existing agreement with TSLS on the Cost Sharing PhD scheme. The expanded agreement was signed by the CEO and Pro Vice-Chancellor International and witnessed Hon. Minister of Education and Board Chairlady of TSLS.

In this agreement, Western Sydney University will cover tuition and TSLS will pay stipend, airfare and any other cost associated with the study. The University has offered 5 scholarships and keen to expand based on Fiji's research priorities.



Minister for Education, Hon. Aseri Radrodro, Chief Executive Officer of TSLS, Dr. Hasmukh Lal and Pro Vice Chancellor International of University of Western Sydney University, Professor Linda Taylor.

24. Parliament - Ministerial Statement by Hon Aseri Radrodro, Minister for Education



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT BY HON ASERI RADRODRO, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

TSLS DELEGATION VISIT TO OVERSEAS SPONSORED STUDENTS, PARTNER UNIVERSITIES AND THE BILATERAL MEETING WITH DFAT

1. Mr. Speaker, Sir,
2. The Honorable Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Leader of Opposition, and fellow Members of Parliament, I warmly greet you all.
3. I would also like to welcome those joining us through livestream from across the globe. Your support and presence are highly appreciated.
4. Mr. Speaker Sir, thank you for the opportunity to present my ministerial statement on the recent TSLS delegation which I led to Australia for number of engagements and outcomes achieved.
5. For the first time, the Government, in this case the Coalition Government has set budgetary allocation to visit the sponsored students studying under the overseas scholarships in Australia and New Zealand. The similar visit is done by other governments across the globe who sponsor students at the universities in these countries.

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6. Mr. Speaker Sir, the purpose of the visit is to check on the student wellbeing and welfare and have direct audience on the challenges faced in order to work out solutions with respective universities. The visit coincided with strengthening and expanding partnerships with the universities.

7. Mr. Speaker Sir, TSLS was established in 2014 and the overseas scholarships started in 2019 under the organisation. There was no visit to the students until 2023.

8. Mr. Speaker Sir, this year I was fortunate to be part of the TSLS delegation which included the TSLS Board Chair and Paramount Chief of the Burebasaga Confederacy Ms. Ro Teimumu Kepa, The Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Hasimukh Lal, Coordinator Overseas Scholarships, Ms. Shahita Chand, Head of Executive Support Mr. Iowane Tiko and Media Officer, Mr. Setanki Looa to visit the universities in the state of New South Wales and in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). The universities that I visited where our students are studying included the University of New South Wales, Western Sydney University, The University of Newcastle, and University of Canberra.

9. Mr. Speaker Sir, the Coalition Government introduced a new scheme in the current financial year to have more Fiji citizens to access PhD scholarships to boost Fiji's human capital. This is the newly introduced scheme called Cost Sharing Overseas PhD Scholarship. Under this agreement the universities will cover tuition fee while TSLS will pay stipend, airfare and any other cost associated with the study. As such, the taxpayers of Fiji will save \$300,000 tuition fee for a four-year PhD programme and will have graduates of top quality.

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10. Mr. Speaker Sir, on the 3rd of July 2024, the University of Newcastle was the first university to come on board the Cost Sharing Overseas PhD initiative. During the visit, I witnessed the signing of the Cost Sharing Overseas PhD MOU between TSLS and the University of New South Wales and Western Sydney University. I thank these two universities for development perspective towards Fiji.

11. Mr. Speaker Sir, I also gained the opportunity to visit the world class Brumbies sports facility at the University of Canberra where TSLS will send prospective students to pursue a qualification in Sports Science and Sports Medicine. This is a model where university has a partnership facility for learning, teaching, research and sports excellence with ACT Brumbies.

12. Mr. Speaker Sir, during the visit to the four universities CEO TSLS, Dr. Lal notified the Senior Executives on scholarship investment design in developing Human Capital, introduction of a new overseas scheme called Scholarships for Merit Based Postgraduate Diploma/Specialization In-Service Overseas and increase in the Scholarships for Merit Based Undergraduate Overseas Scheme quota from 40 awards to 80 awards. The delegation also added on the importance of providing pastoral care to assist students to adjust in the fast-paced environment as well as providing peer mentoring services to students which will assist students in coping with their academic requirements.

13. Mr. Speaker Sir, during the meeting with the students, CEO TSLS, Dr. Lal notified the students on the TSLS policy changes such as increase in bond service from 1.5 times to 2.5 times, increase in termination penalty up to 50% for students who default their bond

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between what is learnt in Year 13 in Fiji and what is taught in the universities in overseas. The sponsored students were assured that the Curriculum innovation and transformation from ECE to senior secondary is one of priority areas of the Ministry and as such the Ministry is working on reviewing the curriculum.

17. Mr. Speaker Sir, under the overseas scholarship schemes, TSLS funds for programmes which are part of national priority areas but not offered by the local universities. A total of sixty (60) students are currently enrolled in areas such as Cyber Security, Software Engineering, Veterinary Science, Data Science, Actuarial Science, Forensic Science, Architectural Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Biomedical Engineering, Environmental Engineering, Mechatronics Engineering, Speech Pathology and Renewable Energy at the New Zealand and Australia based universities. With the increase in scholarship quota at the undergraduate level and introduction of new scholarship schemes, more Fiji citizens will be pursuing quality education in Australia and New Zealand.

18. Mr. Speaker Sir, Fiji is faced with competing priorities and challenges and for Government to alone invest in skilling people to mitigate gaps in our workforce is a challenge with other competing national priorities therefore, during the visit, I had the opportunity to lead the delegation to the bilateral meeting with DFAT where the delegation was joined by His Excellency Ajay Bhai Amrit, Fiji's High Commissioner to Australia, who coordinated the meeting.

19. Mr. Speaker Sir, Fiji has lost 2.5% of its population through permanent and circular migration. It is evident that Australia is the one highly preferred destination country. It is noted that the Australian

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Awards Scholarships are given to our citizens, which we highly acknowledge but there is no monitoring and guarantee, how long the graduates serve in the country and as such in the bilateral meeting with DFAT it was suggested that Fiji citizens for Australian Awards Scholarships are bonded by TSLs. This will ensure that Fiji does not lose Australian Scholarship Award graduates, and they serve at least minimum of 8 years and be cleared from the bond service by TSLs.

20. Mr. Speaker Sir, I acknowledge budget support to the government and where possible, Australia provides targeted funding under the Vuvale partnership. I requested DFAT that targeted scholarship budget is considered to train Fijians in vocational programmes and degree programmes which are offered by local universities. For vocational programmes, we will be flexible if students are trained in Australian universities and TAFE's. This assistance will profile Australia's reputation by assisting through targeted scholarship funding to swiftly mitigate labour loss that has taken place.

21. Mr. Speaker Sir, Curriculum innovation and transformation from ECE to senior secondary is one of the priority areas. The Ministry will develop a concept of curriculum innovation and transformation. DFAT has assured support for Fiji's curriculum review which will be assisted in parallel with the Australian curriculum review. A more discussion will take place leading to this assistance.

22. Mr. Speaker Sir, discussion took place on Ministry's intention to work with DFAT's assistance in setting a teacher up-skilling platform on digital pedagogies and assessments. We need to up-skill our teachers and it is a priority. Fiji will work with ADB and DFAT on

integration of online learning and for that, teachers need to be up-skilled.

23. Mr. Speaker Sir, I discussed that Fiji is expanding its scholarships on its own and through partnerships with Australian universities on PhDs. I am driving this through TSLs so that Fiji can have more researchers informing policies, driving innovations and developing solutions to our challenges. In doing so, we want to establish the Fiji National Research Council or a proxy to allow researchers to receive grants to conduct research on government policies and challenges. A proxy can be a model to begin with research grant based at TSLs and then full scoping to establish an entity on its own.

24. Mr. Speaker Sir, I have secured the pro bono services of two distinguished Professors who are from Fiji to help in the establishment of the Research Council. They are Professor Dharmen Sharma, from University of Canberra and Professor Satish Choudh, from University of New South Wales.

25. Mr. Speaker Sir, DFAT has assured establishing relationship with the Australia Research Council to help setting up Fiji National Research Council as the Act is in place from 2018.

26. Mr. Speaker Sir, to conclude, the investment that Government is doing in quality education and in research degrees. Fiji will reap benefit in 3 to 4 years' time and beyond. We need strong and bold vision in education to build inclusive national and empower our citizens.

25. Parliament Debate - Response to Hon. Premila Kumar from Hon. Minister for Education, Aseri Radrodro



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

HON. ASERI RADRODRO

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

MONDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

227/2024 WRITTEN QUESTION

Hon. Premila Kumar to ask the Minister for Education – Can the Minister provide detailed information on the Tertiary Scholarship and Loan Services (TSLS) for the years 2023 to 2024, specifically –

(a) a year-wise breakdown of the number of students and the TSLS funds disbursed as loans and scholarships to each Higher Education Institute;

(b) a year-wise breakdown of the number of students at each Higher Education Institute who did not complete their studies during this period and the total amount of TSLS funds disbursed that could not be effectively utilised due to student withdrawals or failures; and

(c) the steps the Ministry has taken to address the issue of students not completing their studies under the TSLS programme, and the strategies in place to improve retention and completion rates.

(a) a year-wise breakdown of the number of students and the TSLS funds disbursed as loans and scholarships to each Higher Education Institute;

Response : Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Service (TSLS) administers government scholarships, grants and study loans. TSLS has continuously been working on strengthening the policies to ensure transparent and efficient management of tax payer funds for scholarships and study loans.

In 2023, there were 13,860 students funded by TSLS under scholarships and study loan schemes at various Tertiary Education Institutes while in 2024, there are 15,666 students currently being funded by TSLS.

The breakdown of students funded under scholarships and study loans at various Tertiary Education Institutes are:

Tertiary Education Institutes	Number of Students	
	2023	2024
Fiji National University	7,826	8,333
University of the South Pacific	4,662	4,280
University of Fiji	848	902
Sangam Institute of Technology	299	319
Fulton Adventist University College	102	142
Corpus Christi Teachers College	70	100
Advance Aviation Training (PTE) Limited	-	7
Pacific Flying School	-	13
Centre for Applied Technology Development	19	123
Keshals Business Education Institute	-	32

Montfort Boys Town	2	13
Navuso Agricultural Technical Institute	-	10
Pacific Polytechnic	-	1,192
Pivot Point	-	57
Service Pro	-	10
SPA Academy Fiji	-	14
Vishnu Infotech	-	56
Overseas Universities	22	63
Total	13,860	15,666

TSLS has disbursed tuition payment to various Tertiary Education Institutes as follows:

- 2022-2023 Financial Year - \$36,875,980
- 2023-2024 Financial Year - \$62,414,805

The breakdown of funds disbursed to Tertiary Education Institutes are:

Tertiary Education Institute	Disbursement	
	2022 – 2023	2023-2024
	\$	\$
University of the South Pacific	15,537,414	13,143,401
Fiji National University	30,565,249	30,758,717
University of Fiji	5,729,074	6,695,178
Sangam Institute of Nursing	1,905,438	1,933,260
Fulton College	661,136	485,128

Advance Aviation Training (PTE) Limited		350,000
Centre for Applied Technology Development	54,500	473,700
Corpus Christi Teachers College	492,700	420,200
Keshals Business Education Institute		53,400
Montfort Boys Town		18,835
Navuso Agricultural Technical Institute		6,080
Pacific Flying School		608,189
Pacific Polytechnics	16,000	3,926,699
Pivot Point Fiji Institute		656,952
Service Pro International Tourism & Hospitality Institute		45,500
SPA Academy Fiji		70,000
Overseas	1,914,469	2,771,626
Total Disbursement	56,875,980	62,414,805

The above do not include the allowance disbursed directly to students.

(b) a year-wise breakdown of the number of students at each Higher Education Institute who did not complete their studies during this period and the total amount of TSLS funds disbursed that could not be effectively utilised due to student withdrawals or failures;

Response : Students who were awarded scholarships and study loans in 2023 and 2024 are in still in their active bond term as they are first- and second-year students respectively.

From 2014 to date there are 21,685 students who have either absconded, are inactive or are yet to graduate and their Bond term has expired and equates to around \$160 million dollars of investment.

Breakdown by Institution cannot be released as it will cause reputational damage to the Tertiary Education Institutions.

Trend recorded is that students who had very low marks and were provided with a Study Loan to do degree programmes prior to 2021, attracted high attrition rates from Technical Colleges, adding to the high non completion of programs of study.

(e) the steps the Ministry has taken to address the issue of students not completing their studies under the TSLS programme, and the strategies in place to improve retention and completion rates.

Response : TSLS has various strategies in place to address the issue of non-completion. TSLS provides :

A. Learning Enrichment Services to all our sponsored students to assist in their academic pursuit to improve retention and completion rates.

B. Students with scaffolding support to enrich their learning journeys

C. **Weekly Learning Enrichment sessions.** These sessions are provided to students at flexible hours which includes essential topics such as Time Management, Preparing for Exams, Managing the Coursework, Allowance Management, and the importance of Mental Health amongst others.

D. An **At-Risk Student Intervention** strategy, that has been put in place through the recent amendment to TSLS act during the 2024-2025 budget. As per amendment to the TSLS Act, it is mandatory for Tertiary Education Institutions (TEIs) to provide reports on “at-risk” students. This is to ensure that TEIs have learning support and remedial programmes to improve retention and completion rates. TEIs are required to identify and provide reports to TSLS on all students who are At-Risk of failing their courses by mid-term. TSLS has strengthened its policies by implementing intervention strategies for students who are at- risk of failing, and necessary assistance is provided to the students to avoid the risk of failure as a proactive measure. This is the initiative of the coalition Government.

E. **Confidential Personal Counseling.** TSLS provides a safe space and conducive environment for all students who may be

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In need of confidential one-to-one counseling. Students who are facing any issues that is affecting them academically, can reach out to TSLS, and the necessary counseling services are available to assist them.

F. **On Campus Visits** to meet students and create awareness of the support available to students.

G. **Online Flexible Interactive Sessions** where students are able to join in and talk about issues that may be affecting them, and at the same time begin conversations on the best solutions to face the challenges ahead. Students are able to join these sessions from the comfort of their homes, or school, as Online sessions are a lot more convenient. Session times are early mornings while they commute to school, or in the afternoons and evenings when the students are done with their classes.

H. **Work Skill Development and Industry Mentoring** to sponsored students where TSLS connects students to professionals from the industries such as Accounting, Engineering and Teacher Education. This allows students to hear from the industry professionals on what to expect from the profession they have chosen post-graduation.

I. **Support Sessions for Suspended students** to maintain effective communication with all suspended students throughout the term of their suspension, providing guidance

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and ways on how best to improve academically and get supported on how to re-enter the TEI.

J. **Learning Enrichment for Overseas Students** who are studying abroad.

K. **Post-Graduation Care and Employer Connect Services.** Through this, TSLS provides assistance and guidance to its sponsored students post-graduation. The TSLS Post-Graduation care services equip graduates on the basics while searching for employment such as Resume writing and Preparing for interviews.

L. **Employer Connect Portal (ECP).** This is an in-house developed portal that connects new graduates with potential Employers. Employers can sign up for the portal and post their vacancies, and the same will be visible to all graduates that have signed up. Graduates can upload their Resumes and interest towards positions and employers carry out shortlisting on the same portal.

The Coalition Government will work with TSLS on further strengthening the policies to ensure high completion rate and also ensure transparent and accountable management of government funding and there is maximum return from taxpayer investment in higher education.

-Ends-

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26. International Day for the Eradication Day of Poverty

17th October 2024 to 18th October 2024 - TSLS had an information booth at the Galoa Village Ground in Serua arranged by Ministry for Women, Children & Social Protection. The purpose was to create more awareness about the Government Scholarship through TSLS.



27. Parliament - Ministerial Statement by Hon Aseri Radrodro, Minister for Education



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT BY HON ASERI RADRODRO, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION TSLS DELEGATION VISIT TO OVERSEAS SPONSORED STUDENTS, PARTNER UNIVERSITIES AND THE BILATERAL MEETING WITH DFAT

Salutations

1. Mr. Speaker, Sir.
2. The Honorable Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Leader of Opposition, and fellow Members of Parliament, and all those joining us live through livestream from across the globe and from the comforts of their homes.

Introduction

3. Mr. Speaker Sir, thank you for the opportunity to present my ministerial statement on the recent TSLS delegation visitation which I led to Sydney and Canberra Australia and the outcomes achieved.
4. Mr Speaker sir, it would be remiss of me not to mention that this is the first time that, the Government, in this case the Coalition Government has set budgetary allocation to visit sponsored students studying under the TSLS overseas scholarships in Australia and New Zealand. Similar visit is done by other governments across the globe who sponsor students at universities overseas.

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5. Mr. Speaker Sir, the purpose of the visit is to check on student well-being and welfare and have direct audience with university executives and students in order to work out solutions raised by students or the respective universities. The visit coincided with strengthening and expanding partnerships with the universities.

6. Mr. Speaker Sir, TSLS was established in 2014 and the overseas scholarships started in 2019 under the organisation. There was no visit to the students until 2023.

7. Mr. Speaker Sir, this year I was fortunate to be part of the TSLS delegation which included the TSLS Board Chair Ro Teimumu Kapa, The Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Hasumuhi Lal, and staff from the TSLS and the MDE. Universities visited included the University of New South Wales, Western Sydney University, The University of Newcastle, and University of Canberra.

8. Mr. Speaker Sir, in addition to the intentions of the travel, the Coalition Government introduced a new scheme in the current financial year to have more Fiji citizens to access PhD scholarships to boost Fiji's human capital. This is the newly introduced scheme called Cost Sharing Overseas PhD Scholarship. Under this agreement the universities will cover tuition fee while TSLS will pay stipend, airfare and any other cost associated with the study. As such, the taxpayers of Fiji will save \$300,000 tuition fee for a four year PhD programme and will have graduates of top quality.

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9. Mr. Speaker Sir, on the 3rd of July 2024, the University of Newcastle was the first university to come on board the Cost Sharing Overseas PhD initiative. During the visit, I witnessed the signing of the Cost Sharing Overseas PhD MOU between TSLS and the University of New South Wales and Western Sydney University. I thank these two universities for development perspective towards Fiji.

10. Mr. Speaker Sir, I also gained the opportunity to visit the world class Brumbies sports facility at the University of Canberra where TSLS will send prospective students to pursue a qualification in Sports Science and Sports Medicine. This is a model where university has a partnership facility for learning, teaching, research and sports excellence with ACT Brumbies.

11. Mr. Speaker Sir, during the visit to the four universities the delegation emphasized to the Universities the intentions of the scholarship investment design in developing Human Capital; particularly on the introduction of a new overseas scheme called Scholarships for Merit Based Postgraduate Diploma/Specialization; In-Service Overseas training and the increased quota in the Scholarships for Merit Based Undergraduate Overseas Scheme from 40 awards to 80 awards. The Universities were also requested to ensure pastoral care is provided to assist students in adjusting to the fast-paced environment of learning they are in whereby poor mentoring services to students is emphasized to assist students in coping with their academic requirements.

12. Mr. Speaker Sir, during the meeting with the students, they were notified on the TSLS policy changes such as increase in bond service from 1.5 times to 2.5 times, increase in termination penalty up to 50%

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for students who default their bond service and special emphasis was on scholarship academic obligations since the probation period has decreased from three probations to two probations.

13. Mr. Speaker Sir, after visiting the sponsored students at the four universities, I was overwhelmed with the response that was received from the students. The sponsored students commended the Coalition Government for providing them with the opportunity to undertake programmes at an overseas university. The students also commended the support services provided by the universities and TSLS in achieving their educational goals overseas and assisting them in adapting to the new environment overseas. The sponsored students showed commitment towards completing their programmes and returning to serve the country. I assured the students that the Coalition Government will continue to assist and invest in the youths as they are the future of the country and as such it is the responsibility of the sponsored students to serve their scholarship bond.

14. Minister Speaker, Sir, the students highly acknowledged the visit as it was motivational, and they saw Government's seriousness and commitment to the studies. It costs Government, \$300,000 to fund one undergraduate student in the overseas scholarship scheme when compared to \$30,000 to \$40,000 at a local university. To have commensurate return of service to the country against the investment, the bonding for overseas scholarship is now 2.5 times duration of the study.

15. Mr. Speaker Sir, upon meeting with the sponsored students at the universities, I was alerted on the need to review the education curriculum to allow students a smooth transition from secondary school to the universities. Specifically in Mathematics, Physics and Computer Science. It was highlighted in the visit that there is vast difference

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between what is learnt in Year 13 in Fiji and what is taught in the universities in overseas. The sponsored students were assured that the Curriculum innovation and transformation from ECE to senior secondary is one of priority areas of the Ministry and as such the Ministry is working on reviewing the curriculum.

16. Mr. Speaker Sir, under the overseas scholarship schemes, TSLS funds for programmes which are part of national priority areas but not offered by the local universities. A total of sixty (60) students are currently enrolled in areas such as Cyber Security, Software Engineering, Veterinary Sciences, Data Science, Actuarial Science, Forensic Science, Architectural Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Biomedical Engineering, Environmental Engineering, Mechatronics Engineering, Speech Pathology and Renewable Energy at the New Zealand and Australia based universities. With the increase in scholarship quota at the undergraduate level and introduction of new scholarship schemes, more Fiji citizens will be pursuing quality education in Australia and New Zealand.

17. Mr. Speaker Sir, Fiji is faced with competing priorities and challenges and for Government to alone invest in skilling people to mitigate gaps in our workforce is a challenge with other competing national priorities therefore, during the visit, I had the opportunity to lead the delegation to the bilateral meeting with DFAT where the delegation was joined by His Excellency Ajay Bhai Amrit, Fiji's High Commissioner to Australia, who coordinated the meeting.

18. Mr. Speaker Sir, Fiji has lost approximately 2.5% of its population through permanent and circular migration. It is evident that Australia is the one highly preferred destination country. It is noted that the

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Australian Awards Scholarships are given to our citizens, which we highly acknowledge but there is no monitoring in place on how long the graduates effectively serve in Fiji following graduation. As such our bilateral meeting with DFAT in Canberra discussed ways the students on the Australia Awards can be bonded by the Fiji Government through TSLS. This will ensure that Fiji does not lose Australian Scholarship Award graduates, and they serve at least minimum of 5 years in Fiji and be cleared from the bond service by TSLS.

19. Mr. Speaker Sir, amongst other discussions with DFAT, the delegation acknowledged the Australian Government in its budget support to the Fiji government and made recommendations that the Australia Government considers providing targeted funding for specific job skills training under the Vuvale partnership. We proposed budgetary support towards vocational programmes and degree programmes which are offered by local universities in the areas where Fiji lacks the discipline and skills shortage.

20. Mr. Speaker Sir, Curriculum innovation and transformation from ECE to senior secondary is one of the priority areas discussed with DFAT. The Ministry is working to develop a concept of curriculum innovation and transformation. We are pleased to inform this August House that DFAT has assured support for Fiji's curriculum review which will be assisted in parallel with the Australian curriculum review.

21. Mr. Speaker Sir, as curriculum is reviewed and enhanced, it is expected that teacher skills will need to be upgraded and this was also discussed with DFAT to set up a teacher up-skilling platform on digital

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training and assessments. The MOE Mr Speaker has started dialogue with other bilateral partners on assistance for online learning for both teachers and students and DAFT along with the World Bank and ADB are some such agencies.

22. Mr. Speaker Sir, it must be celebrated that Fiji on the education front, is expanding its scholarships on its own and through partnerships with Australian universities for example on PhDs. The intentions whereby TSLS is the driving force along with the Fiji Higher Education Commission and our stakeholder tertiary providers, we wish to inculcate a culture of research driven policies that encapsulate innovations and entrepreneurship for development resolutions. In doing so, the MOE is driving the establishment of a Fiji National Research Council or a proxy to allow researchers to receive grants to conduct research on government policies and challenges. A proxy can be a model to begin with research grant based at TSLS and then full scoping to establish an entity on its own.

23. Mr. Speaker Sir, during the visit by the TSLS delegation, we were also able to secure the pro bono services of two distinguished Professors who are from Fiji to help in the establishment of the Research Council. They are Professor Dhammen Sharma, from University of Canberra and Professor Satish Chand, from University of New South Wales. We are very grateful to the gentlemen for their support towards the development of Fiji's research capabilities and we will look forward to the support of our other esteemed sons and daughters of Fiji in the area of education research to join us in this noble development intention.

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24. On that note Mr. Speaker Sir, I am also pleased to report that DFAT has assured the assistance of the Australia Research Council to help in the setting up of Fiji's National Research Council which had been agreed by law to be set up in 2018 under the PNRC Act which however is yet to be implemented.

25. Mr. Speaker Sir, to conclude, the investment that Government is doing in quality education and in research degrees, Fiji will reap benefit in 3 to 4 years' time and beyond. We need a strong and bold vision in education to ensure we build an inclusive nation that empowers our citizens. With the Coalition Government's commitment to education, we will definitely make major inroads in our development intentions accordingly Mr Speaker and we thank all stakeholder's working with us to make these aspirations happen.

VINAKA

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28. Parliament - Ministerial Statement by Hon Aseri Radrodoro, Minister for Education



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT BY HON ASERI RADRODORO, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

INVESTMENT IN HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AND COST OF LABOUR MIGRATION

1. Mr. Speaker Sir,
2. The Honorable Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Leader of Opposition, and fellow Members of Parliament, I warmly greet you all.
3. I would also like to welcome those joining us through livestream from across the globe. Your support and presence are highly appreciated.
4. Mr. Speaker Sir, thank you for the opportunity to present my ministerial statement on investments in human capital development and the cost of labour migration.
5. Mr. Speaker Sir, the relationship between labour market, employment, and a country's development underscores the impact of human capital for economic and social development. The post-pandemic era has more than ever before placed focus on how best a country could increase the size of its economy. Fiji has been faced with a growing labour exodus, following the pandemic years however, this is not

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peculiar but a growing global trends as developed countries are facing shortages.

6. Mr. Speaker Sir, labour mobility affects the economic development happening locally, both at horizontal and vertical levels and to offshore destination countries. Technological advancements, access to mass information and globalization are perceived as unmeasuring catalysts.
7. Mr. Speaker Sir, the Coalition Government is significantly investing the education in effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal four (4) which is Quality Education.
8. Mr. Speaker Sir, the Coalition government invests in education starting from Early Childhood Education to Year 13 and to Tertiary Education.
9. Mr. Speaker Sir, the ECE, Primary and Secondary Education, is fully subsidized by Free Education Grant (FEG) including Special & Inclusive Education Grant for children with special needs enrolled in Inclusive or Mainstream Schools.
10. Mr. Speaker Sir, for example, the 2024-2025 budget to Education covered the following:
 - Established Staff - \$302.8m
 - Unestablished Staff - \$4.29m
 - FEG Primary - \$14.75m
 - FEG Secondary - \$30.6m
 - ECE Tuition Subsidy - \$2.92m
 - Transport Assistance - \$37m
 - Printing of textbooks - \$1.5m

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Menstrual Hygiene Initiative - \$1m
 Special & Inclusive Education Grant - \$1.04m
 Higher Education Institutions operating grants - \$85.6m
 Capital Expenditure - \$9.69m
 Administrative operations - \$22.8m
Total MOE Budget - \$427.5m

11. Mr. Speaker Sir, if we look at the expenditure percentage in the current Financial Year, they are as follows:
 - Established Staff - 82.8%
 - Unestablished Staff - 0.89%
 - FEG Primary - 5.54%
 - FEG Secondary - 4.91%
 - ECE Tuition Subsidy - 0.47%
 - Transport Assistance - 5.90%
 - Printing of textbooks - 0.24%
 - Menstrual Hygiene Initiative - 0.16%
 - Special & Inclusive Education Grant - 0.17%
 - Higher Education Institutions operating grants - 14.12%
 - Capital Expenditure - 1.58%
 - Administrative operations - 3.85%
12. Mr. Speaker Sir, the investment in education is aimed at developing human capital so they can contribute to sustainable economic development.
13. Mr. Speaker Sir, Fiji has lost significant number of skilled and unskilled workers to Australia and New Zealand in last few years. This is due to migration, long term work visas, migration pathways through

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student visa and various labour mobility schemes. The data from different agencies or sources on migration needs to be harmonized for national solutions.

14. Mr. Speaker Sir, labour mobility through the PALM Scheme targets unskilled people and is seen as circular migration or as brain drain as workers will come back to the country and there are demystified economic gains.
15. Mr. Speaker Sir, loss of workers to Australia and New Zealand results in lost investment predominantly in education, health and other critical sectors are measured against the return of service to the country and participation in socio-economic activities.
16. Mr. Speaker Sir, we are investing in students' education so they can work in Fiji and contribute to Fijian Economy. We are not funding them to work in Australia and New Zealand. While there are stringent measures announced in 2024-2025 National Budget in effort to reduce number of bonded graduates lost to Australia and New Zealand, more needs to be done.
17. Mr. Speaker Sir, Government spends money in paying tuition and allowance to tertiary students. The investment amount in some programmes in a student is as follows:
 - Commerce - \$35,000
 - Nursing - \$35,000
 - Teacher Training - \$35,000
 - Engineering - \$43,000
 - MBBS - \$135,000
 - Pilot Training - \$198,000

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- Bachelors Degree Overseas - \$350,000

18. Mr. Speaker Sir, in addition to this MOE budget, if we add \$150 million allocated to cover sponsorship of Tertiary Education, the total budget investment will be \$778 million.
19. While we need more regressive testing and analysis to work out exact cost per child, the bear minimum estimated costing shows \$100,000 per child from ECE to tertiary studies.
20. The rate of return of service by students, once graduated and start working needs to be calculated by experts. Researched information, reports, benchmarked data shows 6% to 9% return to the country and it is at a higher end for a developing country.
21. The receiving country in this case, Australia and New Zealand will have multiplier impact to their economy through our skilled people and professionals. We are aware of economic gains to Fiji through PALM Scheme but no results have been made public on the economic contributions to these countries by our migrated people.
22. Mr. Speaker, there should be some form of good will gesture from Australian and New Zealand Government and other countries which are beneficiaries, for social and economic compensation. This can either be in the form of Budget support or direct aid for scholarship funding.
23. Mr. Speaker Sir, immediate plans, negotiations and economic cost and gain needs to be put to the regular bilateral tables. In post pandemic economic recovery, the developing countries are faced with

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exodus of skilled labour and in the context of Fiji, the major destination countries are Australia and New Zealand. Within the rules of diplomacy, Fiji to possibly postulate the following with both countries.

- Increase scholarships to Fiji nationals to study in their country based on Fiji's labour market priorities. The scholarship to have condition to serve Fiji for a minimum of specified duration.
- Scholarships given at bi-lateral levels to Fiji citizens to have bonding with Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Service for bond monitoring and clearance.
- Increase scholarships to local tertiary providers delivering programmes based on employment demand.
- Where applicable, increase and diversify recurrent funding to local tertiary institutions and attach outcomes on demand driven programmes.
- Provide technical assistance and funding for productivity and up-skilling training to targeted industry sectors affected by skilled migration either temporary or permanently.

24. Mr. Speaker Sir, the above is broadly based on economic cost caused to Fiji and socio-economic gains to the destination countries.
25. Mr. Speaker Sir, to conclude, goodwill gesture should be shown by the countries that take our graduates, skilled workers and professionals so that Fiji continues to invest in its people, as competing priorities are increasing on tax payer funded budget.

29. Stakeholder Engagement – Pivot Point Graduation

25th October 2024 - The Chief Executive Officer of Tertiary Scholarships & Loans Service, Dr. Hasmukh Lal, officiated at the graduation ceremony of Pivot Point at the Tanoa International Hotel in Nadi. Graduates proudly received certificates in Men's Barbering, Nail Technology, Eyelash Extension, and Ladies Sculpture, along with diplomas in Beauty & Spa, and Hairdressing.

Special awards included the Creative Award, Principal's Award, and Excellence Award Hairdressing.



Pivot Point Graduation Ceremony

30. Agreement - TSLS Inked an Agreement with Queensland University of Technology (QUT)

14th November 2024 - TSLS inked an agreement with Queensland University of Technology (QUT) for five (5) PhD scholarships on a cost-sharing basis.

QUT will cover the tuition fee, and TSLS will cover the stipend, travel, and other costs. This agreement will allow more Fijians to access PhD study opportunities.

The agreement was signed by the TSLS CEO and Distinguished Professor & Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research of QUT.



Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Distinguished Professor Christopher Barner-Kowollik of QUT and the Chief Executive Officer of TSLS, Dr. Hasmukh Lal signing the Cost sharing PhD MOU.



TSLS team with the QUT team

31. Stakeholder Engagement - 2024 Top Executive Conference (TOPEX)

22nd November 2024 - Dr. Lal was one of the speakers at the TOPEX organized by the Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation (FCEF).

The presentation was about TSLS and its role in human capital development in Fiji. It covered:

- Investment in Human Capital Development (HCD)
- Priority Study Areas (Engineering, IT, Medicine, Business, TVET, etc.)
- Scholarships & Study Loan Schemes for 2025
- New Changes in Scholarship and Loan Policies
- Employer Connect Portal (connecting graduates with employers)
- Government Policies on Bonding & Debt Forgiveness
- Challenges & Solutions (pass rates, job placements, funding plans, retention strategies)



32. Public Awareness – Radio Talkback Shows

7th November 2024 and 20th November 2024 - TSLS participated in the FBC radio talkback shows on Radio Fiji One and Radio Fiji Two (7pm to 8pm), to disseminate information on scholarship schemes, TSLS customer service and Learning Enrichment Service.



33. 2024 Legislative Amendments to the TSLS Act

Provisions	Reference	Act No.
1. Cancellation of Loan Repayment and Debt	<p>Section 16B: Loan repayments cancelled and conversion of loan agreements into bond agreements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The loan agreement for all the students who have studied under various schemes of TELS excluding In-Service Scheme, will be converted to bond agreement. 2) All outstanding TELS Debt except for TELS In-Service Scheme as of 31 July 2023 will be converted into bond Agreement. 3) The students will not be required to pay but must demonstrate their service to the country through paid employment. 4) The employment can be either in a public or any private sector organisation. 5) The bond service will be years of study multiplied by one point five (1.5) for these graduates. If they have provided the service already, they could obtain clearance letter from Fiji Revenue and Customs Services (FRCS). 6) Graduates who studied on TELS and are currently residing 	Act No. 14 of 2023

	<p>overseas will continue to repay their loans through existing arrangements with FRCS.</p> <p>7) If for any reason they disengage from this arrangement, the pending debts will be recovered from their respective approved guarantors. The Accelerated Repayment Incentive (ARI) will continue to apply to these graduates.</p> <p>8) For sponsored students intending to travel abroad for medical, vacation and temporary work purposes, the requirement for nominated guarantors for travel clearance remains the same.</p> <p>9) For those TELS funded graduates who intend to migrate before the bond service period ends, will be required to pay the amount owed to the Government for the remaining period of bond service.</p> <p>10) Those graduates who have fully or partially repaid their loans will not be reimbursed from the date of when amendment to the Act comes into effect. For those that have partially paid their loans, the remaining amount will be converted into bond service.</p>	
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2. Travel & Bond Clearance	<p>Sections 5, 16, 17 & 18: Replaces '<i>Fiji Revenue Customs Service</i>' with '<i>Service</i>'.</p> <p>Section 16A: All bond agreements prior to 1 August 2024 are deemed to have entered with by the '<i>Service</i>'.</p> <p>Section 18A: new section addressing actions taken by the Service on sponsored students/graduates that have unserved bond period.</p>	Act No. 12 of 2024
3. Student employment record	Section 17A: new section on student employment record	Act No. 12 of 2024
4. False Scholarship information	Section 18B: new section on actions taken by the Service against tertiary education institutions who provide false information on scholarships to students.	Act No. 12 of 2024
5. Report on 'At Risk' students	<p>Section 2: Definition of "at risk" students</p> <p>Section 18B: new section on actions taken by the Service against tertiary education institutions who fail to provide performance & learning intervention plans for "at-risk" students. Also, Service may issue written notices/directions to TEIs.</p>	Act No. 12 of 2024
6. Addition of new programmes for funding	Section 25: Resource and Employability Compliance checks with the TEIs and possible employers and deleting FRCS.	Act No. 12 of 2024

34. Policy Change – ICT Transformation Comprehensive Policy

This policy provides a framework to establish suitable levels of information security management systems and aims to provide guidance in safeguarding the security of information systems. The Policy aims to ensure appropriate confidentiality, integrity and availability of information are safeguarded for staff and other authorized users.

ICT Transformation Capital Projects	
Completed	In progress
1. Human Resource Management System 2. Biometric System Upgrade 3. AI Chatbot & Self-Service Portal 4. Learning Enrichment Management System	1. TSLS Mobile App Enhancement – Phase 2 2. Data Analytics and reporting System 3. TSLS Apply System Upgrade 4. Integration with Ministry of Education FEMIS 5. ICT Infrastructure Upgrade 6. Cybersecurity Enhancement 7. Digital Document Management System 8. Sage Upgrade to Cloud

35. 2024 Strategic Plan

1. Customer Service

Focus Area	Objectives	SP Initiatives	% Achieved	Achieved	Final % Achieved
Customer Service Excellence	1.1 Customers are at the Forefront of TSLS Function	1.1.1 Create a customer friendly environment	100	KPI achieved a quick response and no staff-related complains. The New Nadi Office was opened.	100
		1.1.2 Establish a continuous improvement & quality assurance system	100	Ongoing rating and suggestions are analyzed bi-monthly	
		1.1.3 Embed feedback driven improvement in service culture.	100	Customer Experience Surveys were conducted in September 2023 and April 2024.	
	1.2 Continuous Improvement in Service Delivery	1.2.1 Training & Development Programs	100	Ongoing staff trainings and workshops were conducted.	
		1.2.2 Efficient Complaints Management System	100	No staff-related complaints, all complaints dropped were queries.	
		1.2.3 Benchmark for best practices	100	TSLS participated in 2023 FBEA and was awarded "Commitment"	

2. Communications & Awareness

Focus Area	Objectives	SP Initiatives	% Achieved	Achieved	Final % Achieved
Communications & Awareness	2.1 Outreach Empowerment	2.1.1 "Reach the Unreached"	100	Ongoing TEI and School visits on awareness of New Schemes.	100
		2.1.2 Engagement and Awareness with Career teachers on TSLS schemes	100	TSLS Stakeholder Awareness Workshop was held and TSLS launched its 2nd Community Awareness Handbook on 4th August 2023.	
		2.1.3 Conduct regular collaborative sessions with Key Stakeholders	100	Ongoing Meetings with New Listed TEI's on New Schemes and Grants	
	2.2 TSLS Visibility	2.2.1 Strengthen public engagement	100	Tiktok, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram & Viber- 5 weekly posts	
		2.2.2 Regular showcase of TSLS impact & success stories	100	Radio Talk Back show on 1st & 28th September 2023. Radio advertisement on 2024 registration & application. 14 ads on FBC TV, 23 TVC ads on Fiji TV and 95 - 100 cinema advertisements per week for the month of December and February	
		2.2.3 MoUs on collaborations and mutual understanding with organizations	100	1. TSLS signed MOU with Universities of Waikato, Canterbury, Canberra and New Castle. 2. TSLS signed MOU with Fiji Institute of Chartered Accountants 3. TSLS signed MOU with Engineers Fiji. 4. TSLS renewed MOU with Vodafone	
		2.2.4 Internationalizations of TSLS impact	100	Ongoing consultation with other overseas institutions on engaging students for scholarships.	

3. ICT Transformation

Focus Area	Objectives	SP Initiatives	% Achieved	Achieved	Final % Achieved
ICT Transformation	3.1 Accessible and Reliable Information Technology	3.1.1 Upgrade ICT Infrastructure	90	1. Initiated the Data Warehousing and Reporting project, which will cater to all report automation and dashboards. 2. The revamped website is now live. 3. The Cloud Migration project has been initiated. We are working with Datec and Vodafone to complete cloud backups. 4. With the new IT Infrastructure project, we're going to have smart SLAs and endpoint protection to ensure there are no cyber violations.	90
		3.1.2 Innovative communication platforms	90	1. The Learning Management System project has been initiated to cover all awareness, training, and learning needs of TSLS. 2. Phase 2 of TSLS Mobile App development has been initiated.	
		3.1.3 Go Paperless	90	The Digital Document Management System (DDMS) has been initiated to transition from paper-based to digital document management. Tender is to be sent out for outsourcing.	

4. Governance, Compliance & Risk Assurance

Focus Area	Objectives	SP Initiatives	% Achieved	Achieved	Final % Achieved
Governance, Compliance & Risk Assurance	4.1 Effective Compliance and Governance Functions	4.1 Timely Amendments to the Act & Regulations	100	1. Summary of the amendments to the TSLS Act on forgiving TELS debt. Act No. 14 of 2023 implemented and effective 1 Aug 2024. 2. Internal meetings on new inclusions in the Legislative amendments to TSLS Act: I. Travel & Bond Clearance. II. Student employment record. iii. False Scholarship information iv. Report on 'At Risk' students v. Addition of new programs for funding of students 3. i) Compilation of Budget policy submission and drafting of legislative amendments to TSLS. ii) TSLS presented Budget submission to Hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Education and respective teams. iii) Drafting of proposed amendments to the Tertiary Scholarships Scheme Regulations 2024 & Tertiary Education Loans Scheme Regulations 2024	100
		4.1.2 Efficient Budget Management of Scholarships	100	Monthly Board meetings held, and strategic reporting is done.	
		4.1.3 Scrutinize & approve policies, processes, frameworks, TORs for good governance & best management practices	100	1. MLRBS attended BCP training conducted by Fiji Business Disaster Resilience Council & FCEF. 2. Ongoing Review of Policies that have had more than 2 years of implementation. 3. Board formally advised during Board meeting held on 25th June 2024 of the role transfer of Risk Portfolio to Legal Department. 4. Each Section to develop its annual planner: HFCS-tuition & allowance processing plan developed for each academic term. 5. Internal audits are carried out as per the approved plan. 6. Salary Increment implemented for TSLS Staff	

	4.2. Appropriate Recognition Framework	4.2.1 Participate in the Fiji Business Excellence Awards	100	TSLS attended 2023 FBEA and awarded "Commitment"	
		4.2.2 Robust staff evaluation & monitoring process	100	PMS to be conducted bi-annually	

36. Press Release - Record Number of PhD Scholarships for Fiji Citizens

02nd December 2024 - The Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Service (TSLS) is pleased to announce a new cost-sharing sponsorship partnership with the Monash University (MU), Swinburne University of Technology (Swinburne) and soon with Griffith University for Fiji Citizens in Australia.

As part of this partnership, the Fiji Government through TSLS will cover costs such as Overseas Insurance Health Cover, Airfares, Stipend, and other costs while the Monash University will cover the full tuition fee of (15) fifteen students, Swinburne University of Technology and Griffith University will cover for (5) five each.

Earlier, four (4) Australian universities have already signed cost sharing PhD partnership agreements. They are University of New Castle with five (5) scholarships, The University of New South Wales with one (1), Queensland University of Technology with five (5) and Western Sydney University with three (3).

This brings total of 39 scholarships on cost sharing PhD scheme. There are ten (10) PhD Scholarships under the scheme of Masters by PhD by Research at local and New Zealand University. Therefore, a total of 49 scholarships are available for the next academic year. The application for PhD is open for all year round.

This is the historic allocation of PhD scholarships. This will bring multiplier return and significantly boost intellectual capital in our workforce. Fiji is at the cusp of advancements in various sectors and having advanced thinking for planning and development is imperative and catalyst.

In cost sharing PhD scheme, the taxpayers will save average of \$270,000.00 per student and with 39 scholarships in the scheme, the total savings is \$10.5 million. This is achieved through successful negotiations and the Australian universities having development optics towards Fiji and the Pacific.



Left to Right: CEO of TSLS, Dr. Hasmukh Lal, Board Chairperson of TSLS, Ro Teimumu Kepa and Deputy Board Chairperson of TSLS, Dr. Penuel Emi with the signed MOUs with Australian partner universities.





Tertiary **Scholarships**
& **Loans** Service

Empowering Fiji's Future