



FIJI TEACHERS UNION

(THE CHILD OUR HOPE)

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Affiliated to EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL, FTUC, Fiji Teachers Confederation & COPE

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FTU opposes pay cut for civil servants

The Fiji Teachers Union (FTU) believes that the Fiji Institute of Accountants submission on civil servants pay cut is ill-conceived. While FTU feels for Fijians who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, it does not agree with FIA's submission for a civil service pay cut, as this pay cut will bring added hardship and misery. Teachers and other civil servants have suffered under the present regime, as they have lost so much. In the last two decades, civil servants, including teachers' terms and conditions of work have been gradually watered down. Individual contracts were imposed on civil servants, and the long service leave allowance, which was part of the civil service for some 50 plus years, was abolished. The Executive Teacher positions, which were the backbone of primary schools, were reduced by 50% in 2010 and then totally removed in 2017 despite earlier assurances of full restoration. Apart from this, the merit increases as per provisions in the 2017 job evaluation exercise, which was much hyped about by the Ministry for Economy, has not been honoured, and it is almost four years now that civil servants and teachers have not received their merit increment according to the government's own remuneration guideline that was imposed upon the civil service in 2017. Less than 2% of the 13,500 teachers were paid for the 2017-18 MyAPA increment which was done in 2020. FTU submitted to MEHA that the vast majority of high performing teachers were cheated of their merit increment. FTU further submitted that an across-the-board payment be made for 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 period due to the MyAPA assessment system being declared unsuitable and being shelved. FTU continues to wait for a response despite numerous reminders. Teachers, who act on higher positions and deserve the acting allowance, have been denied what they rightfully earned. In addition, a large number of teachers, who are acting on higher positions, have not even received letters of acting appointments. The entry point salary of new graduates was reduced from \$26,283.00 to \$22,584.00 in 2018

although Hon. Minister for Education is on record for assuring teachers that serving teachers would have their salaries upgraded to the correct salary band of \$26,283.00. It was not revealed by the Education Ministry that the remuneration policy had been revised on the quiet on 12th February 2018 to state that graduate salary for all teachers would remain \$22,584.00. Moreover, the boarding allowance review is pending for over a decade. years.

Like most other civil servants, teachers have extended families, unemployed and dependent members who rely upon them. Many of them have been assisting their families and relatives who have lost their jobs since the onset of the pandemic. A vast majority of civil servants continue to sustain members of their extended families who have lost their jobs, or have taken a pay cut or reduced hours at work. Many civil servants also had to come to the assistance of their families rebuild their homes and properties which had been continuously damaged and destroyed by natural disasters. Civil servants have mortgages, bills and other financial commitments to honour and a pay cut will affect their pockets and the ability to meet these payments. FTU is of the firm belief that a civil service pay cut will further cripple our economy and add to the wounds brought by the pandemic. Some individuals are also on the contrary belief that our teachers are on paid holiday. In fact, all our teachers are working from home. They have been preparing notes, worksheets and have been delivering lessons from home. Teachers have been taking zoom classes. Some teachers have also been assisting the Health Ministry as front-liners and have been part of the Ministry's screening teams. Hence, this is not the time to demoralize the effort that has been put in by our teachers. A civil service pay cut will lead to severe hardships. FTU has also noted that top people in government and government statutory organizations and state-owned companies have received up to 300% increase in salaries and allowances in the past years. On the contrary civils servants including teachers have been denied legitimate hard-earned increments for years. Therefore, FTU strongly opposes the submission by FIA on civil service pay cut.



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9.7.21
Agni Deo Singh

General Secretary

FTU