



# **FTC** Fiji Teachers Confederation



President : Netani Druavesi      Our Ref :  
Secretary General : Agni Deo Singh      Your Ref: .

Friday, 22 July 2022

## **2022 – 23 NATIONAL BUDGET RESPONSE**

### **FIJI TEACHERS CONFEDERATION**

1.0 The Confederation has noted with deep concern that there is no provision in the Budget for Annual Merit Increment as stipulated in the Job Evaluation Agreement of 2017. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> year they have been denied the upward movement to the next step they have earned. For example, a teacher on Band E was on Step 1 on the Salary of \$19041.00 wef 01/08/2017. By 2021 he/she should have moved to Step 4 which is \$24,412.00 and thereafter, the annual bonus of \$1,400.00 plus would have been paid. All are still on Step 1, \$19041.00. The teachers on this Band are owed \$5371.00 in increments. We had made a submission to the Permanent Secretary for Economy to include this in the Budget. The Unions claim for the payment of all 4 increments due plus a 10% adjustment to address the CPI is also before the Arbitration Court.

#### **2.0 GRADUATE SALARY**

The Job Evaluation Exercise 2017 put all Graduates on Step 3 Band F, which is \$26,283.00. In 2018 MEHA and Ministry for Civil Service unilaterally did a new Remuneration Guideline and brought it down to Step 1, \$22,528.00. The Unions have been pursuing this for the past 4 years. Assurances were given by the former Minister that this would be addressed but it never eventuated.

The anomaly is a very serious one. New graduates who were recruited at the beginning of 2017 were placed on Step 3 (\$26,283.00). Teachers with Diploma qualification with several years of experience upgraded their qualification to degree level 2018 onwards, and they have been placed on Step 1 (\$22,528.00).

These officers have been short changed as follows:

2018 recruits - \$26,283.53 - \$22,528.74 x 4 = \$ 15,019.16

2019 recruits - \$26,283.53 - \$22,528.74 x 3 = \$11,264.37

2020 recruits - \$26,283.53 - \$22,528.74 x 2 = \$7,509.58

2021 recruits - \$26,283.53 - \$22,528.74 = \$3,754.79

2022 recruits - \$26,283.53 - 22,528.74 = \$3,754.79/ 26 x 15pays = \$2,166.22

The adjustment announced in the budget must be backdated to the respective years they were recruited. This matter is also before the Arbitration Court and the Unions will ensure that the members are remunerated fairly.

### 3.0 CONTRACTS EXTENDED TO 5 YEARS

The short-term contracts of 4 months to 1 year are now being extended to 5 years. Interestingly, just weeks before the Budget announcement, MEHA was adamant on reducing 5-year contracts to 1 year upon renewal. Some were put on 4 months contract and are now without jobs. The Unions have filed an industrial dispute on this matter as well.

The Unions are persistently pursuing the removal of contractual appointments and reinstatement of tenure.

### 4.0 COMPASSIONATE LEAVE



This provision for 3 days per year had been in place for over 4 decades, only to be taken away a few years ago. The purpose was to allow teachers to attend to urgent family matters like attending to sick dependents. Unlike other Civil servants teachers do not enjoy annual leave. Their leave is the school holidays. The Unions were again compelled to challenge the withdrawal in the Employment court. Then came family care leave which only lasted a short few years.

Compassionate leave is now being reinstated. Had the Ministry for Civil Service bothered to discuss this in good faith with the Unions before removal, the heartache the teachers went through during this period could have been avoided.

#### **5.0 IN SERVICE TRAINING**

A mere 160 places allocated to scholarships is grossly inadequate. A large number of the 13000 plus teachers teaching in rural and maritime zones deserve leave with pay to upgrade their qualifications.

#### **6.0 FNPf REDUCTION**

The Unions had been calling upon the State to revert to the full contribution of 18% to enable workers to have a decent retirement pension. Unfortunately, the 2022 – 23 Budget has not included this. The accumulated loss in the long term will be quite substantial, while Government being the largest employer will save millions. It should also be noted that the reduction in employers' contribution is effectively a pay cut.

#### **7.0 WHY NOW?**

It is more than obvious that the requests and pleas of the teachers and submissions made by the Unions have been ignored for the past four years. Somebody suddenly had a brainwave!

We all remember the pre – election allocations in 2014 and 2018.

We also believe that the cases before the courts would eventually result in our favor.

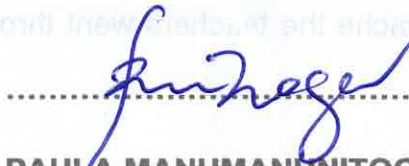
The Unions will continue to pursue the pending matters through the available mechanisms as usual.



**AGNI DEO SINGH**

**GENERAL SECRETARY**

**FIJI TEACHERS UNION**



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