



# Fiji Teachers Union

(THE CHILD OUR HOPE)

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## GREETINGS

*"We must stand together, united in solidarity, against the targeting, demonization, and vilification of any group of people." (Linda Sarsour)*

Bula Vinaka and warm greetings to all members of FTU and a special and warm welcome to the members who have joined FTU this year!

Brothers and Sisters in Union, FTU is indebted to you for your unreserved support and assistance last year. Your overwhelming support enabled the team at FTU to win by large majority and continue serving the membership. We are proud that our members made the right call.

Like last year, 2022 also did not have the perfect start as Fijians in the Western and Northern division felt the brunt of TC Cody which brought with it heavy rainfall, resulting in flooding of low-lying areas.

Schools were closed for two weeks, and this affected quality time that teachers had with their students- especially Year 12 and 13 students who sat for their external examinations.

Families had to seek shelter in schools, which were used as evacuation centres, and this delayed the re-opening of schools.

External examinations were also postponed by one week.

Brothers and Sisters in Union, be rest assured that FTU will assist students who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and also the aftermath of TC Cody. Members whose homes were affected will also be assisted by FTU CTCL.

Despite the circumstances, FTU continued to have dialogue with the Ministry to address issues facing teachers.

This year, FTU needs unwavering support from its members as member support determines the success of Union activities.

Hence, we look forward to your participation in all branch activities.

The Union is looking forward to the Annual Conference and AGM which had to be postponed last year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We extend our thoughts to the families in Tonga who were affected by the volcanic eruption. FTU stood in solidarity with the Tongan Teachers Union.

## SCHOOL TERMS 2022

The dates for the terms are as follows:

- Term 4 2021- 04/01- 01/04
- Term 1 2022- 11/04- 08/07
- Term 2 2022- 18/07- 06/10
- Term 3 2022- 17/10- 16/12

## TEACHERS CONTRIBUTION

FTU is grateful that our members made extraordinary contribution at the height of COVID-19 pandemic. Apart from preparing worksheets and modifying lesson notes, teachers collected and marked these worksheets. They also conducted zoom classes. Many teachers worked beyond their job description when schools re-opened. They went the extra mile to prepare schools for re-opening as per the standard operating procedures. FTU salutes you teachers for your dedication and commitment!

## NEGATIVE REMARKS AND COMMENTS

FTU expressed grave disappointment at the Minister and senior staff at MEHA for the negative remarks and comments that were passed against teachers. There was little appreciation and one-way traffic as decisions were made in an ad hoc manner. School heads were sent emails and viber messages after hours, demanding response at short notices.

## TEACHERS WELFARE AND SAFETY

Teachers' welfare, safety and health is paramount, and FTU is of the firm belief that this should not be compromised at the height of a natural disaster.

### INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ISSUES

The Fiji Teachers Confederation (FTU and FTA) met with the Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts, Honourable Premila Kumar, and the PS Anjeela Jokhan. As usual, we congratulated the new Minister on her appointment. NP and GS- FTU and GS and IRO- FTA attended the meeting. A lengthy deliberation and discussion took place. The matters for discussion included structures of consultations, disciplinary guideline, anomalies in the JEE, MyAPA Assessment, allowances paid to teachers and the disciplinary guideline.

The Minister agreed that the panelists should be non-teachers. She also agreed that:

- 1) Whistleblowers must provide their full identification and be subjected to appropriate action if allegations proven false; and
- 2) Unsigned letters and third-party complaints not to be entertained.

The parties agreed to meet quarterly.

However, since the unions strong response to the derogatory remarks about teachers qualifications etc., MEHA reneged.

### GRADUATE SALARY

The 2017 Job Evaluation Exercise put graduate salary at \$26,283.00. MEHA and the Ministry for Civil Service endorsed the 2018 Remuneration Guideline, which was in breach of the 2017 JEE agreement. Three different salary scales are used: \$26283, \$24000 and \$22500. This is cheating! The Union will pursue relentlessly until a positive outcome is achieved.

### MERIT INCREASE

Lest we forget for the assessment period 2017-2018, only 137 teachers received an increment. The union is alarmed that for the periods from 2018- 2019, 2019-2020, and 2020-2021 there is no word on any increment being paid out to teachers. As per the JEE, all teachers should have been on step 4 + paid a bonus as promised by the then Education Minister Honourable Aiyaz-Sayed Khaiyum during the road shows that he conducted nationwide. **ANOTHER PROMISE NOT HONOURED.**

### FTU FILES LEGAL ACTION

It was indeed very sad that MEHA suddenly changed the MQR on the quiet to eliminate senior leaders including principals, VPs, APs and HODs who have a degree plus STTC and degree plus DTT. According to MEHA, only those who have postgraduate qualifications would be promoted as school heads. The union filed proceedings in the Employment Court to stop MEHA from implementing a new system in promoting heads

of secondary schools. The union believes this decision is unfair, discriminatory and unjustified and shows total disregard of their own policies. The union's argument is that those who possess equivalent qualifications, that is, degree in the relevant subject plus teacher training component (STTC and DTT included) must not be eliminated.

### ACTING ALLOWANCE

Numerous complaints regarding non-payment of acting allowances were received. Acting allowance has been paid for primary schools in December 2021, but several secondary schools acting allowances are yet to be paid. This is being pursued.

### DIS-ESTABLISHMENT OF POSTS

The re-classification of schools has seen a large number of schools downgraded, resulting in loss of substantive posts. These include: primary school Head Teacher and Assistant Head Teacher positions, HoD positions as well as HoS Positions in secondary schools. The union has been reliably informed that all HoD positions with less than 3 teachers are being abolished. The criteria should be 50 by 40 minute periods.

### TRANSFERS

Submissions made for transfers were followed up. However, numerous genuine transfer cases on medical ground were denied. Teachers who have served in rural and remote areas for six years plus were also denied a transfer. HR officers have poor understanding of the school system.

### SHORT LEAVE

The officer-in-charge of leave in HR section advised a Head of School that there was no provision for short leave in the General Orders. Clarification has been sought from HR. An urgent meeting was sought with Head HR, and he called to advise that approval from PS was being awaited.

### CONTRACTURAL APPOINTMENTS

As expected, the Union has experienced MEHA instilling fear in the teachers due to the one-sided draconian contracts of employment. We have also noted lately that teachers have been issued contracts with short durations. Some have been given four month's contract and advised they will not be renewed.

Secondary trained teachers, who had taught in primary schools for several years, were laid off at the beginning of 2021. Those, who are still employed, have been given 12 months contracts. One such member has taught for 12 years. The one month notice of termination of contract actually sends shivers down the spine,

considering the current attitude of the top people in MEHA. Purchases on credit terms, bank loans, etc. are also affected.

### **“FTU STAND- CONTRACTS MUST GO!”**

#### **ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

This year’s Annual Conference will be hosted by Nasinu Branch at Rishikul Sanatan College Hall since the branch leaders have opted for full normal conference.

The details of the conference are as follows:

- Date: Sunday 3rd to Wednesday 6th April 2022
- Venue: Rishikul Sanatan College
- Theme: COVID-19- A Challenge to Education Resilience
- Chief Guest: Govind Singh- Secretary General Council of Pacific Education (COPE)

#### **CONFERENCE PROGRAMME**

##### **Sunday 3rd April 2022**

10.00am	Pre Conference Meeting
2.00pm	Sports Committee Meeting

##### **Monday 4th April 2022**

8.30-9.00am	Registration of Delegates
9.15am	Guests and Delegates get seated
9.30am	Official Opening of the AGM and Annual Conference
	Presidential Address
	Address by the Chief Guest- Govind Singh
	Vote of thanks
10.30am	Morning Tea
11.00am	Annual General Meeting
	Resolutions (Part of AGM Agenda)
2.00pm	Lunch
3.30pm	Sports- Official Opening
7.00pm	Launching of History Book - Cultural Nite

##### **Tuesday 5th April 2022**

9.00am	FTU-CTCL AGM
11.30am	Morning Tea
12.00pm	Women’s Wing AGM
1.00pm	Lunch
2.00pm	Sports
7.00pm	CTCL Dinner Night/ Social

##### **Wednesday 6th April 2022**

8.30am	FTU Sports
10.00am	Post Conference Meeting
5.00pm	Presentation of Prizes

#### **BRANCH DELEGATES**

Branch delegates should be appointed as per the FTU Constitution Section 32 Clauses 1-9. It is advisable that all members in the Branch are informed of the above well before the Branch AGM, and delegates be appointed in the Branch AGM for the Annual Conference.

#### **CULTURAL NIGHT**

Members who wish to perform during the Cultural Night on Monday 4th April 2022 at Rishikul Sanaatan College Hall are to give their names to their Branch Secretaries.

#### **CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE**

Branches are requested to bring large delegations to the Annual Conference and AGM in order to make a strong statement to the authorities on the numerous matters of grave concern pertaining to the status of teachers and workers at large in the country. Unity is solidarity, and in solidarity we shall pursue!

#### **SPORTS**

Branches are expected to prepare the teams to participate in soccer, netball and men’s and women’s volleyball. FTU HQ also anticipates an increase in membership during this period.

#### **BILLETING**

Details for the arrangement of billeting during the Annual Conference will be sent to the Branch Chairpersons.

#### **FTU AGM RESOLUTIONS**

All resolutions for AGM’s consideration should come through your respective branches. The resolutions should be tabled in the Branch AGM and endorsed by the house, with a mover and seconder. All resolutions must reach the Secretariat by close of business on 18/03/2022.

**BRANCH AGMs**

All Branch Annual General Meetings must be conducted and completed within the month of March from March 3 to March 19, 2022. This is to enable the National Executive meeting to take place on the 26th of March for the preparations for the Annual Conference and AGM.

Branch elections will be conducted by the Fijian Elections Office in compliance with the union's Constitution. The Secretariat will ensure that the nomination forms are dispatched to the branch Secretaries.

Your name must appear in the Branch list for eligibility to vote. However, if your name is not on the list, then the Master Roll will be referred to.

Cash Paying Members- subscription must be fully paid for 2022 to be eligible to participate in the Branch AGMs.

New Members- Civil Servant teachers who have signed the Authority Forms for their membership deductions at source and their membership has been approved, will be able to participate and vote at the Branch Elections.

**Please check your membership status, with the Secretariat or the Branch Secretaries.**

**Note:** The notice of branch AGM's will be advertised in The Fiji Times. All nomination forms must be forwarded to the Fijian Elections Office/ FTU.

The dates and venues for the Branch AGMs are as follows:

BRANCH	DATE	VENUE	TIME
Savusavu	12/03/2022	Nasavusavu District	10am
Nasinu	09/03/2022	Rishikul Sanatan College	4pm
Navua	03/03/22	Vashist Muni Primary	4.30pm
Lautoka	16/03/2022	Lautoka Special School	4pm
Tavua	09/03/2022	Tavua Primary School	4pm
Bua	12/03/2022	Korokadi Primary School	10am
Suva	16/09/2022	FTU HQ	4.30pm
Nadi		Sangam SKM College	

Tailevu	16/09/2022	Korovou Primary School	4.30pm
Nadroga	16/03/2022	Tuva Primary School	4.30pm
Labasa	12/03/2022	Kshatriya Hall	10am
Levuka	05/03/2022	Levuka Public Primary	10.30am
Ba	10/03/2022	Xavier College	4.30pm
Rakiraki	03/03/2022	Penang Sangam High	4pm
Taveuni	13/03/2022	Taveuni Central Sanatan Primary	10.30am
Rewa	09/03/2022	Vunimono High School	4pm

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

This year's International Women's Day will be celebrated on Tuesday 8th March with the theme 'Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow'. Branches are urged to celebrate this important day with women members, and appreciate their contributions to the economy and society in general. The Southern Branches will meet at FTU HQ on Tuesday 8th March for a celebration.

**MEDICAL INSURANCE BOOKLETS**

The self-funding insurance booklets, with all the amendments are being disseminated to the branches to be distributed to their members. Please, read through the booklets.

**YEAR PLANNER**

The FTU Year Planner has been disseminated to the Branches to be distributed to all the FTU members. School reps must ensure that the FTU members are given a copy of the FTU Year Planner.

**CHANGE OF BRANCH**

Members who have changed Branches are to notify the Secretariat immediately so that the membership records could be updated. Please note that if you change schools or are posted out of the current district and which means a change in the Branch, please have your records updated. The final date for membership for participation in the AGM and Conference is 25th March 2022.

### SCHOOL REP & SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP LIST

We humbly request School Reps to forward the school membership list to FTU HQ at the earliest as this will enable HQ to have accurate information on the number of members in every school so that the right number of Union literature could be sent.

The Union Administration System has been upgraded and members are urged to update their personal information, email address, telephone number, marital status (including dependents) and school address at their earliest- even during the school holidays.

The School Rep is FTU's mouth-piece to the members at grass-root level. School Reps are requested to deliver the required Union Literature to the members in their schools.

### INCREASE IN INSURANCE PREMIUM

Members must note that the premium for the FTU Self-Funding In-house Medical Insurance Scheme was increased effective from 1st January 2021 as per the decision of the Rishikul AGM in October 2020.

The reason for the increase in the FTU Self-Funding In-house Medical Insurance Scheme is that the medical cost has risen worldwide and that the premium had not been increased since the inception of the Medical Insurance Scheme at the Rewa AGM in 2011.

Medical expenses have increased from \$400,000.00 in 2011 to \$1700 000 in 2019.

**Hence, the change in premium is as follows:**

- (i) Family cover increased from \$17.31 to \$23.00 per fortnight.**
- (ii) Single cover increased from \$13.46 to \$17.00 per fortnight.**

Members are requested to pay their arrears from pay one. The Union thanks those members who have already paid.

### BRANCH VISITS/ CLUSTER MEETINGS

The General Secretary will continue to visit schools and districts, and will address cluster meetings to enlighten members on current issues, as well as, maintain connectivity. School Reps and Branch Executives need to work hand-in-hand to ensure that these cluster meetings are a success in terms of attendance of members.

### MABS & MEDICAL INSURANCE REMINDERS

Members must take note of the following as far as MABS is concerned:

1. For Medical Insurance, the FTU office must be notified if there is a change in status (marriage) and children's name added if there is any addition in the family.
2. Referral letter must be obtained from FTU doctor for any tests or specialist treatment through MABS.
3. MABS claim must be made within a month.
4. Medical reports must be provided by all news applicants who have been in the teaching service for more than 12 months.
5. If the spouse is a teacher, then both have to be members to get Insurance and MABS benefits. If not, only the member and children will receive the benefits.
6. Under FTU Medical Insurance Cover, all post-surgery reviews are to be done at the nearest Public Hospital. Any cost incurred at the Public Hospital will be reimbursed.
7. Members must check with MEHA to see that their Union and medical deductions continue when contracts are renewed.
8. Death benefit for non-member spouse and child was increased from \$500.00 to \$1000.00. However, still born child or death at birth would remain \$300.00.

### MEMBERSHIP - ECE TEACHERS

Some ECE teachers have joined the Union and others are welcome to join as well, as per the Rules and Constitution of FTU.

### POLICY ON TEACHER'S RIGHT

A submission has been made to MEHA to formulate a policy on teacher's rights. This should include protection from unnecessary harassment and threats from external and internal parties.

### HISTORY BOOK

The FTU History Book has been compiled by Mr Krishna Datt. The book has also been thoroughly vetted by some prominent former FTU members and National Executives. The History Book is ready for launching at the AGM and Annual Conference.

### CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Teachers are reminded that MEHA has zero tolerance on corporal punishment. We advise our members not to use any form of corporal punishment.

The Union has continued to resolve member's grievances with the Ministry. Where unfair termination or non-renewal of contracts had taken place, the disputes mechanism had been activated.

In cases of corporal punishment, members are requested to note the following:

1. Where a member has confessed in a written or verbal statement that he/she has inflicted corporal punishment, the Union will not be able to represent.
2. Where police has charged a member and the member successfully defends and gets acquitted and re-instated, the Union will reimburse the legal cost up to \$4000.00.
3. Where a member completely denies the allegation and the Ministry appointed panel investigates and declares him/her guilty resulting in termination, the Union will represent the aggrieved member.

### MEMBERS HEALTH

With the rise in non-communicable diseases, the Union advises all members to look after their health, the type of food consumed and members must ensure that they have some time in the day to do some physical activities.

### FTUC

The Fiji Trades Union Congress is the mouth-piece of Trade Unions in Fiji. The National Secretary Bro. Felix Anthony has been raising issues with ILO on the challenges faced by Fijian workers.

### FTU WEBSITE/ FACEBOOK PAGE

We encourage members to take advantage of the FTU Website and FTU Facebook page to retrieve more information on the latest developments, press releases and information pertaining to industrial relations issues.

*Please note, the Union does not abandon any case, regardless of how long it takes. Information is repeated in FTU Newsletters for continuous awareness.*

### NATIONAL EXECUTIVE MEETING

The final National Executive meeting for 2021 took place on Monday 20th December 2021 at the FTU HQ. Industrial Relations issues, Union Services, Branch Reports and the Financial Report were discussed at length. Branch Reps are requested to disseminate discussions via their Branch Newsletter.

### PINKTOBER CELEBRATION- NASINU BRANCH

FTU Nasinu branch hosted the Pinktober celebration at Nasinu Sangam on 28th October. This was the first gathering of any kind organized by a branch, and we commend Nasinu for the wonderful get together. Members were enlightened with the presentation by the Fiji Cancer Society. NP and GS also addressed the gathering.

### PLANNING- FTU ELECTED MEMBERS

A planning exercise was held at FTU HQ on Friday 26th November, beginning at 6pm, at FTU HQ. The elected NE members met to discuss the way forward.

### SOUTHERN ZONE SPORTS MEET

FTU Rewa Branch hosted the Southern Zone sports meet on Saturday 27th November at Saraswati Manoca Primary School. Despite the rain, a good crowd turned up, and the four southern branches- Rewa, Suva, Nasinu and Navua were represented. NP was the Chief Guest. GS addressed the gathering during tea break. The sports atmosphere added glamour to the one-day event. The results are as follows:

Sport	Winner	Runner-up
Football	Rewa	Nasinu
Netball	Nasinu	Suva
Men's Volleyball	Suva	Navua
Women's Volleyball	Navua	Suva

HQ congratulates and commends the Southern teams for their participation.

### MEETING WITH NORTHERN BRANCH EXECUTIVES

The Principal Officers had a workshop with the Northern branch Executives on Saturday 4th December in Labasa. The workshop was based on union services, MABS and the medical insurance. Executives of Savusavu, Labasa and Bua attended the workshop.

### COUNTRY REPORT- COPE

A country report consisting of FTU activities pre and post-COVID-19 was submitted to the Council of Pacific Education.

### BRANCH SOCIALS

It was pleasing to note that various Branches organized socials to get members together, and also to thank them for the work done in 2021. We urge Branches to organize a get together at the beginning of the year.

### CONCLUSION

“You guide your team when they lose the path, you pick them up when they fall, and you give them motivation when they have none.” (Pooja Agnihotri)

The commitment of FTU leadership to stand up and defend the collective and individual rights of the

membership remains steadfast, and has been praised by many. FTU has stood firm to defend its members when dirt was thrown at them. The various press releases and media statements are indicating that FTU is very much alive and well.

**TEACHERS SHORTCHANGED**

Members will note that in the last few years, MEHA has taken numerous cost cutting measures at the expense of the teachers. This includes long-service leave allowance, drastic reduction in post of responsibility positions, executive teacher positions, counselor positions, graduate salary, location allowance, non-payment of increments, boarding allowance and the like. The 5% reduction in FNPF contribution by MEHA is actually equal to a paycut. The entry point salary for graduates is another glaring example of cheating a large number of teachers.

While the Ministry has saved millions, teachers have lost out substantially. The Union will continue to pursue persistently for the restoration of these losses.

MEHA has endured five ministers and four permanent secretaries in the last few years. Each one has changed policies at whim, escalating the level of uncertainty and inconsistency, leaving all stakeholders in immense dilemma. It is indeed a very sad state of affairs.

We are nowhere near meeting the targets we set for ourselves in 2015 to progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4. Our repeated calls for an Education Commission have been ignored for over a decade now. However, FTU will continue to fight persistently to ensure that members' rights and dignity are re-stored.

Our campaign for quality public education will also continue.



**Our contribution to Fiji Cancer Society**



**Pinktober Awareness/Celebrations 2021 – Rewa Branch**



**International Womens Day – FTU Headquarters**



**AGM 2020**



**Western Branch Leaders Workshop 2020 – Hideaway Resort**



**Northern Workshop 2020**