



Fiji Teachers Union Newsletter

(THE CHILD OUR HOPE)

March 2020

Published by the
Fiji Teachers Union

Vol. 90 No. 3

1-3 Berry Road, P.O. Box 2203 Govt Building, Suva. **Phone:** 3314 099 / 3314 668 **Fax:** 3305 962 **Email:** ftu@connect.com.fj

GREETINGS

"The most important word in the language of the working class is SOLIDARITY." (Harry Bridges)

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

FTU wishes you a productive and prosperous 2020 academic year. On the same note, Brothers and Sisters in Union we thank you for your unreserved support and assistance in 2019.

Despite the adversities, FTU continued to dialogue with MEHA to address issues facing teachers and we assure members that we will keep the Union flag flying high.

However, 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.

SCHOOL TERMS 2020

- Term 1 – 13/01/20 – 17/04/20
- Term 2 – 04/05/20 – 07/08/20
- Term 3 – 24/08/20 – 20/11/20

90th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

This year's Annual Conference will be hosted by Labasa Branch. Labasa last hosted the Annual Conference in 2014 and the Friendly

North is beaming with excitement to host the next.

We hope that our members will enjoy the hospitality of the Friendly North.

The Union urges members to be part of the contingent that will travel to the North to be part of the 90th Annual Conference.

The Executives of Labasa Branch will leave no stone unturned to make your stay there enjoyable.

The details of the conference are as follows:

Host: Labasa Branch

Dates: 20th April- 23rd April 2020

Venue: Labasa Sangam College Hall

Theme: The Impact of Recent Reforms on Fijian Education



Chief Guest: Dr Tupeni Baba

Dr. Baba hails from a remote village close to Udu point in Cakaudrove.



Dr. Baba is a Professor in Education and Dean of the School of Humanities and Arts at The University of Fiji at Saweni, Lautoka where he has worked for two years, to date.

He worked for twenty years at the University of the South Pacific, some four years at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, a short attachments at the East West Centre, Hawaii, the University of Guam's Centre for Micronesian studies, and the University of Manchester in England.

Dr. Baba was educated at Tawake District School Niusawa Methodist Mission School, Lelean Memorial School and Suva Grammar School.

He received his early university education at three universities in Australia: New England University in NSW, The University of Sydney, and Macquarie University also in Sydney.

There he earned his credentials, a (Ph.D (Macq. Med., Syd,BA Dip Ed NE).

In 1987 he served as the Minister for Education in Dr. Bavadra's Government which only lasted weeks due to the Military Coup.

He was Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education in Mr. Chaudhary's Government in 1999, which was again removed by coup.

9.30am	Official Opening of the 90 th AGM and Annual Conference
	Welcome Address by Chairperson – FTU Labasa Branch
	Presidential Address
	Keynote Address and Official Opening
	Vote of thanks
10.30am	Morning Tea
11.00am	Annual General Meeting
	Resolutions
2.00pm	Lunch
3.30pm	Sports Official Opening- Subrail Park
7.00pm	Cultural Night/ Dinner- Kshatriya Hall

Wednesday 22/04/2020

9.00am	FTU-CTCL AGM- Labasa Sangam College Hall
11.30am	Morning Tea
12.00pm	Women's Wing AGM
1.00pm	Lunch
2.00pm	Sports- Subrail Park
7.00pm	CTCL Dinner Night/ Social- Friendly North Inn

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Monday 20/04/2020

10.00am	Pre Conference Meeting - Labasa Sangam College Hall
2.00pm	Sports Committee Meeting

Tuesday 21/04/2020

8.30-9.00am	Registration of Delegates- Labasa Sangam College Hall
9.15am	Guests and Delegates get seated

Thursday 23/04/2020

8.30am	FTU Sports continues at Subrail Park
10.00am	Post Conference Meeting
5.00pm	Presentation of Prizes

BRANCH AGMs

All Branch Annual General Meetings must be conducted and completed within the month of March, as per the Union's Constitution.

Branch elections will be conducted by the Fijian Elections Office.



Members, who were fully subscribed till 31/12/2019, are eligible to participate in their respective Branch Annual General Meetings.

Your name must appear in the Branch list if you want to vote.

Your name is not on the list, FEO will not allow you to vote.

Cash Paying Members – subscription must be fully paid for 2020 to be eligible to participate in the Branch AGM.

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 was advertised in the *Fiji Sun* on February 5, 2020 and nominations closed on February 19, 2020.

All nomination forms were forwarded to the Branches.

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.

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

BRANCH	DATE	VENUE	TIME
Savusavu	07/03/2020	Khemendra Central School	10am
Nasinu	12/03/2020	Rishikul Sanatan College	4.30pm
Navua	11/03/2020	Vashist Muni College	4pm

Lautoka	18/03/2020	Lautoka Special School	4.30pm
Tavua	11/03/2020	Tavua Primary School	4pm
Bua	21/03/2020	Korokadi Primary School	10am
Suva	11/03/2020	FTU HQ	4.30pm
Nadi	05/03/2020	Sangam SKM College	4pm
Tailevu	14/03/2020	Korovou Primary School	10am
Nadroga	18/03/2020	Tuva Primary School	5.30pm
Labasa	07/03/2020	Kshatriya Hall Labasa	10am
Levuka	14/03/2020	Levuka Public Primary	10.30am
Ba	18/03/2020	Xavier College	4pm
Rakiraki	19/03/2020	Penang Sangam High	4pm
Taveuni	21/03/2020	Taveuni Central Sanatan Primary	11am
Rewa	11/03/2020	Vunimono High School	4.15pm

The election of Office Bearers will be conducted by the Fijian Elections Office.

YEAR PLANNER

The FTU Year Planner has been sent 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.

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 **10/04/2020**.

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Members are invited to write an A5 2-page article for this year's Journal on the theme '**The Impact of Recent Reforms on Fijian Education**'.

The National Executive members are reminded to submit an article for the Journal as well.

Members will remember that due to lack of quality articles from members the Publicity Committee was not able to publish the FTU Journal last year.

Members are also reminded not to submit University assignments. Please include a reference with your article.

The due date for the article is 01/04/2020. Articles can be e-mailed to: ftu@connect.com.fj.

The Publicity Committee has the right to select and edit the articles.

BILLETING

Branches are requested to contact Bro. Pratosh Kumar - Chairperson Labasa Branch on 9207770 and Pranesh Sharma - Secretary Labasa Branch on 9928058 for the arrangement of billeting during the Annual Conference.

CULTURAL NIGHT

Members who wish to perform during the Cultural Night on Tuesday 21st April 2020 are to give their names to their Branch Secretaries before 17th April, 2020.

There is a need for more commitment to revive the Cultural Night and make it more melodious.

CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

Branches are requested to bring large delegations to the 90th 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.

SPORTS

As usual sports will be a major feature of the conference. 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.

CHANGE OF BRANCH

Members who have changed Districts or Branches are to notify the Secretariat immediately so that the membership records could be updated.

Also 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 Branch transfer cutoff date was 04/02/2020.

Members who want to participate in the Conference Sports must ensure that their names appear in the appropriate Branch Register.

Note that your choice of a Branch can be either through residential qualification or the school in which you teach.

The final date for membership for participation in the AGM & Conference is 10/04/2020.

Afternoon and Saturday classes – purely on voluntary basis : PS-MEHA

SCHOOL REP & SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP LIST

The School Rep should be elected by the members in school. 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.

Reminder. Please forward the school membership list to FTU HQ at your earliest.

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FTU IN-HOUSE MEDICAL INSURANCE

Members will remember that the Self-funding Medical Scheme became part of FTU in 2011 in Rewa at the AGM.

Members will also note that every year FTU has added benefits to the Medical Scheme.

The Scheme is incurring substantial expenses because locally and internationally medical costs have increased

Cardiac treatment, for instance, which cost around \$21,000.00 in 2011 costs around \$35,000.00 in the present time.

Therefore, there is a need to increase insurance subscriptions in order to ensure that the Scheme is sustainable in years to come.

Please find below the comparison of the cost analysis factor that will help explain the purpose for the increase in subscriptions for the Medical Scheme.

Also note that the FTU Medical Scheme has been bench-marked against the Medical Premium Cost of other medical insurance providers.

Three major medical programmes and an individual medical product with local and overseas evacuation (evacuation to India) have been compared with the current FTU member's premium cost.

This will be further discussed in all Branch AGM's and members are urged to contribute positively.

Inception date- 7th July 2011 as per approval of the Rewa AGM

Cover as per 7th July 2011

- Local treatment cover up to \$10,000.00
- Overseas treatment cover up to \$250,000.00 where treatment was not available locally and the insured members had to be evacuated overseas.

Premium

- Family Cover \$17.31 fortnightly
- Single Cover \$13.46 fortnightly

The In-house Medical Insurance has grown and so have the benefits but the premium remained the same.

ADDED BENEFITS SINCE 2011

PERIOD	
2011/2012	Initial Coverage.. Local Limit \$10,000 Overseas \$250, 000. Age Limit 65 years. Premium applicable Single - \$13.46 / fortnight Family - \$17.31 / Fortnight
2012 /2013	Coverage extended to cover those patients on waiting lists @ Public hospital to be treated at Private Medical Facility up to a limit of \$3,500 or 50% of the total cost per treatment whichever is lesser . Advanced coverage also included for gall stones and kidney stone removal @ private medical facility. No increase in premium.



SELF - FUNDING MEDICAL COVERAGE PLAN / STOP LOSS REVIEW

Upon review of the performance of the Self-Funding Medical Coverage Plan since its inception, the following has been noted:

1. Increase in medical claims.
2. Increase in medical costs.
3. Claims incurred over 6 months (July 1 to December 31)- \$974,785.45



Health Care Cost on the Rise

The cost of healthcare benefits continues to increase, as seen through the past years, with no end in sight.

Analysis of cardiac condition cost since inception of the FTU In-house Medical Insurance Scheme:

Medical condition cost	2011	2018
Cardiac	\$21,169.00	\$35,000.00

This is an increase of 65% since the inception of the In-house Medical Insurance Scheme.

2013 / 2014	Local limit increased from \$10,000 to \$15,000. Private ward limit of \$500 was removed. \$100 / person was included to be paid for overseas evacuation, where patient and accompanying person are in transit for more than 3 hrs. No increase in premium.
2014 / 2015	Wait listed cover limit increased to \$4,500 + 50% of the balance incurred cost. No increase in premium.
2015 / 2016	Wait listed cover limit increased to \$5,500 + 50% of the balance incurred cost. Age limit increased from 65 - 68 years. No increase in premium.
2016 / 2017	Wait listed cover limit increased to \$6,500 + 50% of the balance incurred cost. Local hospitalisation limit increased from \$15,000 to \$20,000. No increase in premium.
2017 / 2018	Wait listed cover limit increased to \$7,500 + 50% of the balance incurred cost. Age limit increased from 68 - 70 years. No increase in premium.
2018 / 2019	Wait listed cover limit increased to \$8,500 + 50% of the balance incurred cost. Local hospitalisation increased from \$20,000 to \$25,000. \$100 accommodation allowance to be paid in cases where member decides to stay with their family during the treatment overseas including local hospitalisation. Coverage extended to include dependent child's age limit more than 25yrs provided he/she is fully dependent his/her parents. No increase in premium



THRESHOLD

The fund caters for expenses up to the **THRESHOLD** and the re-insurer meets all cost exceeding the threshold, for instance, in 2019 the total 12 months bill was \$1,136,386.16 and the reinsurer (Fiji Care Limited) had to pay \$286,386.16

YEAR	STOP LOSS THRESHOLD
2011-2018	\$850,000.00
2019-2020	\$1000,000.00 with 40 and 60 percentage of the loss to be shared by FTU and Fiji Care Insurance respectively
2020-2021	Proposed Threshold to go up to \$1300,000.00

PROPOSED CHANGE

As per increase in medical costs since 2011 and the fact that the premium has not been increased since 2011 and to meet the ever-rising medical costs, the proposed new premium to be as follows:

- Family – Increase from \$17.31 to \$22.00 per fortnight
- Single – Increase from \$13.46 to \$16.00 per fortnight

The above increase in premiums is factored into the plan structure as demonstrated below including the PROPOSED change in the stop loss threshold limit.

BENCH MARKING MEDICAL PREMIUM COST

Three major medical programmes and an individual medical product with local and overseas evacuation (evacuation to India) – comparison with current FTU member's premium cost:

INSURED	PREMIUM COST (F\$)
Company A Fully Insured	Single - 825.00 Family - 1,050.00
Company B Fully Insured	Single - 450.00 Family - 700.00
Company C Fully Insured	Single - 446.40 Family - 1,041.87
Individual Fully Insured	Single - 971.00 Family - 1,742.00
Fiji Teachers Union -Current Self Funding / Stop Loss Healthcare Plan	Single - 350.00 Family - 450.00
Proposed Premium	Single - 416.00 Family - 572.00

New Proposed Self-Funding Medical Coverage / Stop Loss Structure			
Total Staff Members		Fort nightly	Annual Contribution
Single	1,233	\$16.00	\$512,928.00
Family	2,272	\$ 22.00	\$1,299,584.00
Total	3,505		\$1,812,512.00
Total Contribution	\$1,812,512.00		
Stop Loss Limit (expected healthcare expenses)	1,300,000.00		
Broker TP Admin Cost	82,008.00		
FTU Administration Fee	42,000.00		
Stop Loss Premium	115,000.00		
Surplus Fund	\$274,504.00		

Members, food for thought!



(Continuation from Page 4)

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.

PUBLICITY OFFICER

The Publicity Officer Bro Manhar Kumar has resigned as he has moved to NZ for greener pastures.

FTU takes this time to congratulate Bro Manhar Kumar and also thanks him for his dedication and commitment in serving FTU at both Branch and National levels. We wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

The next NE meeting will appoint a Publicity Officer who will be at the position until next year's FTU National Elections.

Meanwhile, Bro Brij Singh has kindly agreed to be interim Publicity Officer to produce the Journal.

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

All FTU members are reminded to refrain from using Facebook during official hours. Please do not post comments on issues related to the Ministry or to the government as you could face disciplinary consequences.

Please read the Use of Social Media Policy and familiarize yourselves with the contents in the said policy. While we have reservations on this policy, it has to be complied with till it is effective.

MABS & MEDICAL INSURANCE REMINDERS

1. For Medical Insurance, the 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 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 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. Membership: Members must check with MEHA to see that their Union and Medical deductions continue when contracts are renewed.

FTU- CTCL

FTU-CTCL is the financial service arm of FTU and it has been doing well. Members were paid dividend last year.

Members are urged to read the FTU-CTCL Newsletter and familiarise themselves with rules regarding the use of free nights at Fiji Hideaway Resort and Spa.

Dividend cheques will be issued after the AGM.

Members are urged to notify the FTU-CTCL HQ of any change in postal address.

FTU CTCL HQ

CONTACT NO- 9957802/9920026/ 3304770

MS.SUNITA CHAND [MANAGER]-9944114

MR. CHANDAR DUTT [CEO] – 9994770

LAUTOKA OFFICE -9929771

LABASA OFFICE- 9929778



INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Teachers are reminded that MEHA has zero tolerance on corporal punishment. Please read Circular No. 4/2019.

We advise our members not to use any form of corporal punishment.

OMRS

The Union had consistently been submitting to MEHA to consider proven performance on the job with relevant experience and qualification, but it had fallen on deaf ears.

FTU had fruitful meetings with the Minister and former PS and discussions took place on the revised OMRS criteria.

The Union is pleased to note that experience in leadership position has been included in the revised matrix.

For acting positions, the Union has been advised that experience in leadership and proven performance would be considered.

HEADS DEMOTED

The Union had noted last year that a number of performing School Heads were demoted and the Union immediately brought this to the Ministry's attention.

Principals were relegated to Vice Principal's position and Head Teachers were relegated to Classroom Teachers or Assistant HT's. The Union had persistently pursued this matter with MEHA and CSRMU and it was finally agreed that:

(i) Relevant experience and performance be included in the MQR.

(ii) There will be no job test but applicants will have to write a KESA.

The Union has also raised concern that KESA is limited to 750 characters only.

The Union had also filed a case with the Arbitration Court challenging the decision to re-advertise position that attracted 15% upward adjustment.

DIPLOMA IN TERTIARY TEACHING

MEHA had sent notifications to all teachers with the above qualification that it wasn't relevant. Their contracts were renewed for only 2 years .

They were further advised to complete PGCE in 2 years to remain in the service.

The Union successfully argued and convinced MEHA to recognize the qualification and offer full 5 year contracts. A huge relief to this group of teachers, many of whom are our members..

ENTRY POINT SALARY

Entry point salary for new graduates had been reduced from \$23,411.00 (pre-JEE) to \$19,000.00 to \$22,000.00 (depending on the scores in the Job Test.) w.e.f 2018. Hon. Minister is on record for assuring the teachers that this will be addressed.

Graduate Salary as per JEE should be \$26,823.00.

Entry point salary of Graduates without teacher training, reduced from \$21,438.00 (pre - JEE) to \$14,000.00 post JEE. w.e.f 2018. Hon. Minister is on record for assuring the teachers that this will be addressed.

The Union has reminded the Ministry to expedite.

MEHA POLICIES

Members are urged to read and familiarize themselves with policies related to their job.

These policies can be downloaded from the Ministry's website.



REPORTING TO SCHOOL IN THE HOLIDAYS

Members would recall that a statement was issued in the press asking all School Heads to report to their schools during the school holidays or face acting allowance cut. Heads who were overseas panicked.

However, through the Union's intervention MEHA reversed the decision.

DISCIPLINARY GUIDELINE- PSDT

The Union is concerned that the Guideline gives the Permanent Secretary unfettered powers to terminate an employee after considering the report of the three member investigation panel.

Members would note that the panel members are appointed by the PS.

The Union's position is that all cases must be referred to the PSDT as the independent Tribunal to adjudicate.

This is to ensure natural justice is accorded to the accused.

Meanwhile, the Union is pursuing several individual members' grievances through the ERT and the Employment Court.

APA & INCREMENT

My APA was rushed and completed by 30th April, 2018 with the commitment that increments and bonuses would be paid w.e.f 1/8/18.

Upon inquiry in September 2018, the Director CSRMU responded that the exercise was not completed yet and any increase would be paid on 31/12/18.

FTU was informed last year that a large number of School Heads had not returned My APA forms, and thus the delay!!

The Union is tired of listening to all sorts of lame excuses for the delay in payment.

FTU will continue to pursue regardless.

ET POSITIONS

Members would recall that the ET positions were reduced by 50% in 2010. The Union continues to impress upon MEHA to restore ET and counselor positions.

While teachers have been invited to attend training as counselors, ET positions remain unresolved.

TRANSFER CONCERN

The Union notes with grave concern that numerous transfer requests have been denied and many transfer cases are being processed despite the fact that school has started.

The Union has found out that families continue to be separated due to transfer issues while teachers who have served in rural schools for a number of years were not given a transfer despite members requesting within time.

The Union issued a press release on this issue.

TEACHERS DUTY HOURS

It is rather unfortunate that despite reminders, some Heads of Schools compel teachers to work beyond the stipulated 8.00am to 3.30pm Monday to Friday duty hours. This is breach of the Labour Law.

STUDENT FREE DAYS

The Union is concerned that 7 days have been taken away from teacher's holiday for the student free days programme.

The case is before the Labour Court. The Union awaits a ruling on this matter.

LATE RENEWAL OF CONTRACTS

The Union was disappointed to note that the Minister for Education blamed teachers for not uploading their contracts.

The Union is of the belief that the contracts should



have been emailed to the teachers before the end of the school year and not during the holidays or at the beginning of the academic year.

MEMBERS SUFFER FROM DEPRESSION

The Union issued a press statement that increased paper work and increased class sizes were having a negative impact on the health and mental status of teachers.

The Union urges the Ministry to consider the large class size and look at having 1:35 class teaching ratio.

Schools in the urban areas have large class sizes and this has a negative impact on the teaching and learning programme.

TEACHER SHORTAGE

The Union notes with disappointment that a number of schools do not have the required number of teachers.

The Union is equally disappointed that there are a number of graduates who can fill up the void but these graduates have yet to receive a posting.

The Union calls upon MEHA to look into the issue of teacher shortage in schools.

Heads/School Reps are requested to advise the Secretariat of teacher shortage in their schools.

MEMBERS HEALTH

The Union is saddened to lose members along the journey. The Union is also saddened that some members are not taking good care of their health.

The Union advises all members to please look after their health, the type of food consumed and that members must ensure they have some time in the day to do some physical activities.

NCD's are on the rise and members must take precautionary measures.

FTUC MATTERS

The Fiji Trades Union Congress has been raising issues faced by Trade Unions in Fiji at every International Labour Organisation meeting which is attended by the National Secretary Bro. Felix Anthony.

Promises made by the Fijian government to amend labour laws that deny/ limit Trade Union Rights have not been fulfilled.

The campaign is going on despite the challenges.

EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

The General Secretary attended the EI Board Meeting in Kuala Lumpur from 1-2 February. He pressed on issues that teachers in Fiji are facing.

Education International with International Trade Union Congress (ITUC) strongly supports our cause.

NON-TEACHING TIME FOR HEADS

As per MEHA Circular 79/2019 School Heads are required to teach as follows: Small 0.5 of a full teaching load, Medium 0.25 and Large 0.20.

Most of the Small and Medium School Heads are already teaching due to teacher shortage. The work load of School Heads is already enormous.

The Union has submitted to the Ministry the need to address teacher shortage so that the School Heads are free to ensure quality delivery of education.

DOWN-GRADING OF SCHOOLS

The Union notes with concern that a large number of schools have been downgraded despite having the allocated staffing as per the Job Evaluation Exercise Classification. The Union is pursuing this matter as well.



SOUTHERN BRANCH EXECUTIVES WORKSHOP

Executives of the Southern Branches will be having a workshop at the Headquarters on Saturday 29 February from 9am to 2pm.

The issues discussed included Industrial Relations, Union services and benefits, Roles of Branch Executives and FTU-CTCL literature.

The Northern and Western Branch Executives will also have their workshops later as per the Union Year Planner.

2014 ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN PICTURES

