



PEOPLE
First

Savenaca Narube
PARTY LEADER

UNITY FIJI

"Restoring Hope & Freedom"

MANIFESTO

FOR THE 2022 ELECTIONS

Abstract: This Manifesto outlines the initiatives that a Unity Fiji Government will implement. Our priority is the elimination of poverty through education, the transformation of our resources and the creation of employment especially through small and medium enterprises.



Savenaca Narube
Leader of Unity Fiji

A highly qualified Leader:

- Bachelor of Commerce (Eco & Acc) from Canterbury, NZ; and
- Master of Commerce with Hons (Econometrics) from NSW, Australia.

A trusted and proven Leader:

- Former Governor of the Reserve Bank of Fiji (9 years)
- Former Permanent Secretary for Finance (4 years)
- Worked at the World Bank and the IMF (4 years)
- Former Chairman of the RBF, FNPF, FRCS, FINTEL, FSM, Fiji Reinsurance Company and Rakavi Trust
- Former Director of ATH, TFL, FEA and FSC
- Former Trustee of the Fiji Rugby Union

A high achiever:

- Rescued the economy after the political crises in 2000 and 2006
- The only Permanent Secretary for Finance to post a budget surplus in the modern era
- Established the Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority
- Reformed the telecommunications industry to what Fiji enjoys today
- Secured the Southern Cross submarine cable which carries our communications with the rest of the world
- Introduced the modern electronic payment system

An experienced Unity Team:

Savenaca Narube leads a Unity Team that is skilled and experienced in fisheries, agriculture, health, education, business, accounting, community work, trade and industrial relations.

A VISION OF UNITY:

THE HISTORY OF UNITY FIJI

Unity Fiji was established in late 2017 by Adi Sivia Qoro, Mr. Kaliopate Tavola and Mr. Savenaca Narube. The three founding members had served the people of Fiji with loyalty and distinction. Adi Sivia Qoro was a former Minister for Commerce and Industry. Mr. Tavola was a former Minister for Foreign Affairs and Ambassador to the European Union. Mr. Narube was the former Governor of the Reserve Bank of Fiji and Permanent Secretary for Finance.

Noting the extreme positions of the existing political parties in 2017, the founding members of Unity Fiji saw an urgent need to introduce a moderate political party which is not at the extremes of the political spectrum. They also recognised that political polarisation was one of the main reasons for the lack of national unity. At the same time, the founding members wanted to change the political landscape of the country from one of self-serving politicians to those that serve the people.

Instead of imposing unity as this Government was doing, the founders' vision was to build unity through diversity, respecting and protecting our own unique cultures and traditions.

Unity Fiji was born with the bold vision of its founders to unite the country and reverse the economic and financial deterioration since the 2006 military coup.

Unity Fiji was registered as a political party in August 2017 with a motto of putting "People First".

Adi Sivia is the President of Unity Fiji, Mr Tavola is a member of the Executive Board, and Mr. Narube is the Party Leader.

FOREWORD by the Leader of Unity Fiji

"RESTORING HOPE AND FREEDOM" MANIFESTO OF UNITY FIJI

"Enough is enough. Let us unite and fight against economic mismanagement, social degradation, corruption, attack on basic freedoms, and dictatorship that have brought inequalities, discriminations, intimidation, and poverty." (Savenaca Narube, Leader of Unity Fiji)."

Enough is enough. This Government is unfit to lead us in the next four years.

It is time to go back to the polls to vote for Fiji's new government. I say new because the government that has governed us since the late 2006 has not served the people, only themselves. The current government's track record is the worst in our history. This Government will leave behind a monumental mess for the new government to solve. The cost of living is soaring. Wages are stagnant. As a result, the purchasing power of wages has plummeted. \$50 of shopping which used to fill a cart is now only enough to fill one plastic bag. Bus fares have risen. Jobs are not enough. Many graduates are walking the streets looking for work. Private sector confidence is at an all-time low. Fiji's ranking in the World Bank's index of the ease of doing business has dropped from 52nd to 101st during the term of this government. We are in a debt crisis equivalent to \$8,000 debt per man, woman, and child. **Over 400,000 of our people are living in poverty which is the highest in history. Most of our families are struggling to feed and provide for their daily needs.**

Living in Fiji, which we proudly proclaim as our paradise on earth, has turned into suffering and pain. Enough is enough. This Government is unfit to lead us in the next four years. **This Manifesto outlines our plans to save this country and restore hope and freedom for the people especially our youths.**

Unity Fiji has the leadership that the people can trust.

In this unprecedented economic and financial crisis, the people need a new leader who can solve these multifaceted problems. The people need new solutions. Old leadership and solutions have not worked. In fact, they can make our situation worse. Unity Fiji has clearly demonstrated through our qualifications, hands-on experience, and proven track record, that we have the right leadership for such a time as this. **It is very important that we choose a new leadership that cares for the people and not themselves. Unity Fiji carries no baggage from the past. It is a clean party.**

Unity Fiji calls for the restoration of a civilian led government after the 2022 election. Unity Fiji has the leadership that the people can trust. You can place your trust, hope and confidence on Unity Fiji to deliver Fiji from this crisis and lead us to a brighter future - where the world should be.

May God bless you and your families. Please vote and make your vote count.

ORGANISATION OF THE MANIFESTO

This Manifesto is organised around the four pillars of eradicating poverty, ensuring rights to essential services and freedoms, eliminating corruption, and healing the wounds of the past. Integrated into these four pillars are cross cutting principles of inclusive and trusted leadership, family values, and changing mindsets. Prior to discussing these pillars, the Manifesto reviews the economic and social environment in which these measures are being taken.

The impact of the Manifesto on government expenditure, revenue, deficit and debt is in the Appendices. The Unity Fiji Budget is based on one full year of operations. The projections are based on the information that is publicly available and our own analysis. These projections will be updated when Unity Fiji forms government.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

There are three important cross-cutting principles that are woven into the Manifesto:

Leadership you can trust

Unity Fiji believes that this election must be on leadership. A good team is ineffective without a good leader. Fiji has been led by coup makers for 25 years, nearly half of the years of our independence. Unity Fiji believes that the country must return to a civilian leadership like the late Turaga na Tui Nayau, Timoci Bavadra, Mahendra Chaudry, and Laisenia Qarase. The country is hemorrhaging from an economic and financial crisis, and we desperately need a leader who has the qualifications and the demonstrated experience to stop the bleeding. There is a huge cost to the people especially the poor for choosing the wrong leader. Fiji has been carrying these costs for a very long time.

Unity Fiji will provide servant leadership. We will be transparent and put people first. Recognizing that we live in a multicultural society, our policies will be inclusive of all ethnic groups. We will leave no one behind. We have heard the cries of the minority groups like the descendants of the Melanesian people living with disabilities, senior citizens and other communities. We will heal the wounds of the past. To allow the country to move forward, we must solve these long-standing issues.

Changing mindsets and attitudes

To achieve our dreams and aspirations, we must change mindsets and attitudes that tend to hold us back from reaching our dreams. We will work with the faith-based organisations and the Vanua to instill tolerance and understanding of our differences. We will build national unity from the ground up. We recognise that the process of uniting Fiji up to now has not been inclusive due to the lack of consultations and the dictatorial leadership which has left many ethnic groups feeling disempowered and marginalised. This has been manifested in the socio-economic inequalities experienced at every level of society. Unity Fiji, together with you, will work to heal these wounds and reverse the inequalities. We must celebrate our diversity and work towards achieving a functioning and prosperous modern state that upholds freedoms and human rights. We will rid Fiji of the attitude that the country needs coup leaders and dictators.

Putting people first

Unity Fiji's motto is **"People First"**. This theme is woven into the entire Manifesto. For too long politicians have put themselves, not the people, first. Once they get elected, politicians forget about the people who voted them in. Trust in politicians is at a very low level. Unity Fiji pledges to uphold its motto. We will implement what we say that we will do. We will put you first.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Economic Conditions and Outlook

Fiji entered the COVID-19 pandemic with weak economic fundamentals. The Government based its economic plan on government spending which has led to a debt crisis. With the high level of wastages which we estimate to be \$1 billion a year, the impact of government spending on the economy is weak. This puts a big risk on the ability of government to service a ballooning debt.

The Government relied heavily on tourism while it ignored the resource-based sectors like agriculture, forestry, and fishing. As a result, the pandemic devastated the economy. The economy slumped by 2% in 2019, 19% in 2020 and again by 5% in 2021. The ability of the Government to respond to the crisis was severely limited by the high debt level. As a result, Government could not ease the suffering of the families and instead directed them to raid their lifetime savings at the FNPF while catering for the corporate sector.

Government projection of economic growth of over 11% in 2022 is optimistic. It is entirely based on a fast rebound in tourism. The impact of the global recession brought about by the intensifying war in Ukraine, will hurt our recovery. Unity Fiji estimates that growth will rise by only 5% in 2022.

Fiji is in a **debt** crisis. We estimate that debt will rise to 95% of GDP by the end of this year. The quality of government expenditure is low which will lead to debt servicing problems in future. Debt servicing including principal chews up 42% of domestic revenue which means that 42 cents of every dollar of revenue is used to repay debt. This leaves only 58 cents of every dollar available for other government services. This crowding out effect is increasing which has already led to cut back in other essential government services especially health.

The pandemic is now followed by an **inflation** crisis due to the rise in international fuel and food prices. This will further push many families below the poverty line. The government estimates inflation at 5% this year and this has already been exceeded. Unity Fiji estimates inflation at 6%.

The **unemployment rate**, which hovered around 6 per cent before the pandemic, is estimated to have shot up to around 35 per cent. The unemployment rate of youths is much higher.

The explosion in **poverty** is the biggest challenge facing Fiji. The HIES estimated poverty at 30% of the population before the pandemic. We now estimate poverty at 40% of the population. That is about 400,000 people living in poverty.

Social Conditions

The economic crisis has created an unprecedented social crisis which has manifested itself into gender-based violence, prostitution, drugs, suicides, and the breakup of families. Unity Fiji believes that the depth of this social crisis especially on our youths and women is much deeper than what we see at the surface. This requires a concerted and coordinated efforts of Government, civil societies, faith-based organisations and the Vanua.

This set of economic and social problems present a considerable challenge to the incoming government to resolve. The root causes of our multiple problems are economic and financial. Unity Fiji has the experience and qualifications, unmatched by any other political party, to implement the right mix of fiscal, economic and monetary policies to restore stability and peace in the country.

Snapshot of Economic Conditions

Table: Snapshot of Economic Indicators

Indicator	Status	Global Benchmark/ National Target
Debt stock	95% of GDP (Est)	40% of GDP
Debt Service	40% of domestic revenue	15%
GDP growth	Declined by over 22% in the last 3 years	3% annual growth
Unemployment	35% (Est)	8%
Poverty	40% (Est)	10%
Inflation	6% (Est)	1% - 2%
WB's index on Ease of Doing Business	Ranked 104th in 2021	Ranked 52nd in 2006
World Press Freedom Index	Ranked 102nd in 2022	Ranked 52 nd in 2006

PILLAR 1: ELIMINATING POVERTY

Poverty is the scourge of the earth. It destroys lives. It shatters dreams. It lowers the dignity of living. It leads to many social ills. Eliminating poverty is therefore the top priority for Unity Fiji. Our poverty elimination program is multi-dimensional from education to the utilization of natural resources and better prioritisation of government expenditure.

Raising the quality of Education

Education is the key to severing the link of intergenerational poverty. Unity Fiji believes that education is a right and not a privilege. We will continue to champion the rights of all students to reach the highest level of education that they can achieve. Unity Fiji considers that the education reforms introduced by this Government have been without consultations with relevant stakeholders such as school managements and teacher's union as representatives of teachers and workers. This has created ineffective policies and uncertainties with too many changes to the education system, curriculum, and lack of support from government to up-grade facilities.

Unity Fiji recognises that the main challenges facing the education system are: quality of education, budgetary allocations, affordability, drop-out rate (out-of-school youth), student discipline, accessibility to facilities and quality teachers in rural and semi-urban schools.

To raise the quality of education in Fiji, Unity Fiji will:

- Continue the assistance currently given to students in primary and secondary schools;
- Reduce the teacher to student ratio estimated at over 50 to 30 by addressing the shortage of teachers especially in public schools. We will also include professional development of teachers and standardisation or common curriculum by all teacher training institutes;
- Conduct consultations on the removal of tenure and introduction of contracts linked to performance pay and its impact on teacher effectiveness;
- Improve the quality and facilities in Early Childhood Education (ECE) Centers and Persons with Disabilities;
- Appoint an Education Commission to independently evaluate the education system, help design education reforms, and promote rigorous understanding of the outcomes of specific policy choices; and
- Revise the outdated Education Act (1978).

Free Education to Tertiary Level

Unity Fiji acknowledges that tertiary education of students is paramount to their career development.

Accessible and affordable tertiary education, through scholarships, provides opportunities to break the cycle of inter-generational poverty. Currently, tertiary education is not affordable for many low-income students and families. Unity Fiji will offer free tertiary education through:

- Remove the TOPPERS and the Tertiary Education Loans Scheme (TELS);
- Introduce a new scholarship scheme which will provide a scholarship to every student who secures a place at a registered tertiary institution in Fiji. The Unity Fiji Government will work with tertiary institutions to map out the resource skills gap in the country; and
- Forgive all debt under the existing TELS.

Reviving technical and vocational education

Technical and vocational education provides skills that the nation needs to grow. The Government closed all technical and vocational colleges after only three years of establishing them. Around 370 staff lost their jobs overnight. Many students were stranded in their studies. This creates a gap between the skills that the industries need and those that the education system provides.

Unity Fiji will:

- Re-establish TVET schools nationwide; and
- Consult with stakeholders to develop a new model for TVET in Fiji.

Keeping the cost of living down

Fiji is emerging out of a health crisis into an inflation crisis. Fiji is suffering from the increase in world prices of fuel, food and fertilizers. The worst is yet to come. We project these prices to continue to rise.

This inflationary spiral coming soon after the devastation of the pandemic will push many families below the poverty line.

To keep the cost of living down, Unity Fiji will:

- Maintain the zero rate of VAT on the 21 items;
- Increase the items that are under price control;
- Review the fiscal and import duties on essential food items;
- Review the templates of prices of items under price controls to ensure that the burden is shared equitably between the people, the private sector and the government;
- Review the instruments of monetary policy to keep prices low; and
- Initiate a program of import substitution through the Economic Transformation Program (ETP) described below.

Increasing the take home Pay

To complement the measures to moderate the rise in the cost of living, Unity Fiji will put more money into the employee's hands. Towards this aim, Unity Fiji will:

- a) Raise the income tax threshold to \$40,000;
- b) Reduce income tax below an income level of \$50,000;
- c) Review the tax allowances and deductibles; and
- d) Compensate the loss of revenue from the above measures through increases in income tax of high-income earners and a progressive corporate tax system.

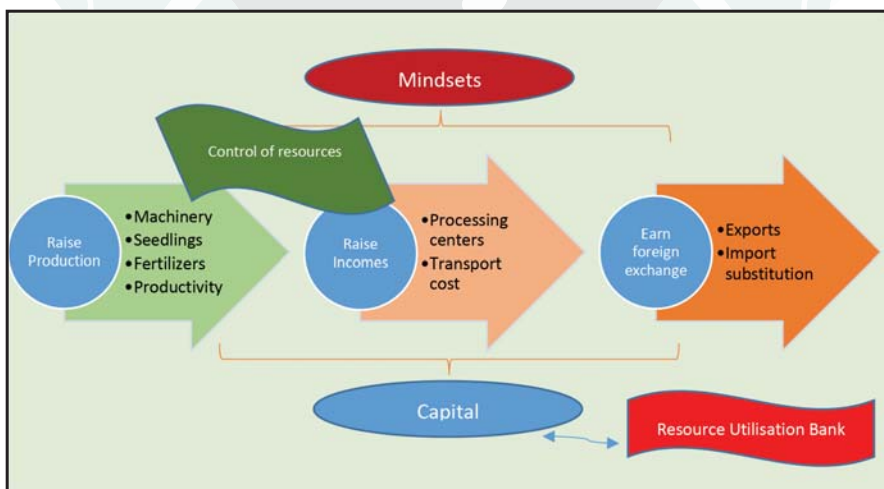
Economic Transformation Program (ETP)

Since our independence 52 years ago, Fiji has seriously underexploited its natural resources of sea, land, and streams with flow on effects to pervasive poverty and greater vulnerability. The eradication of poverty rests with maximizing the use of natural resources. All past initiatives to harness these resources have failed badly due to the wrong approaches, the lack of integration and the wrong model.

Through the five platforms below, Unity Fiji will introduce a new integrated approach that will revolutionize the economy and provide more incomes to all resource owners irrespective of ethnicity and location.

- **Platform 1: Machines:** Unity Fiji believes that the time for forks, spades and knives are over. It is now time for machines and new technologies that will convert small farms to larger ones. Unity Fiji has identified technologies that will provide seedlings and organic fertilizers to cater for large farms. This platform will double the production of agricultural and other resource-based products in 4 years.

- **Platform 2: Processing Centers:** For too long, resource users only have one option to get money and that is to sell their products at the local market or on the roadside or to the middleman. Women spend days away from their families to sell at the market, while at the same time take home very little money for their efforts. The middleman or the exporter gets most of the gain from their sweat. The earnings from natural resources are maximized through processing. Unity Fiji will establish processing centers across Fiji to process natural resources. These centers will be owned by the resource owners themselves who, with the facilitation of government, can export directly abroad. This platform will increase the income of resource owners many folds.
- **Platform 3: Protecting the control of resources:** While the ownership of resources is protected in the imposed Constitution, this Government has progressively weakened the control by the resource owners of their resources through changes in the laws. Unity Fiji will remove all laws including Bill 17 that weaken the ownership of resources by resource owners. We will also review the computation of leases towards market value rather than the unimproved capital value. We will explore changing the imposed Constitution and the laws to allow landowners to own resources found on their land.
- **Platform 4: Capital:** Many resource users and owners do not have capital to fund their initiatives. The commercial lenders including the Fiji Development Bank do not lend enough to this high-risk group. Unity Fiji will help resource users find capital through pooling of their lease money and government grants. Unity Fiji will also explore the establishment of a commercial bank to cater for the development of natural resources.
- **Platform 5: Mind sets:** It is essential for the success of these platforms that owners and users of natural resources adopt a new mind set and attitudes to lift productivity and manage businesses successfully. Changing mindsets is never easy. Unity Fiji will work with the faith-based organisations and the Vanua to change attitudes and mindsets. Ethnic groups can also mentor each other to help in this change.



The ETP model will transform the entire economy. It will succeed because it is integrated with the full support of government. It will revolutionize the distribution of income and narrow the widening differentials between the rich and the poor. It will provide jobs to many people in the rural areas. It will be supported through an extensive training program. We will develop crop insurance products. The ETP has the potential to double our GDP in five years.

Addressing the problems in the sugar industry

The struggles of the sugar industry have been left unattended for decades. Like past governments, this Government has turned a blind eye on these struggles and instead has propped up an inefficient and financially insolvent Fiji Sugar Corporation and closed the Penang Mill in Rakiraki. The Government has turned a profitable FSC into an insolvent one. The net assets of the FSC were a positive \$174 million in 2006 but this Government has turned it into a negative net asset of \$300 million. The price of cane has remained stagnant for a long time. There have been no reforms to the industry since 2006.

Recognizing the importance of the sugar industry to many families especially the Indo Fijian farmers, Unity Fiji will:

- Include sugar cane farming in the ETP;
- Raise the price of sugar cane to \$110 a tonne;
- Reform the payment of cane to allow the farmers to get income earlier and more regularly;
- Review the reopening of the Penang sugar mill;
- Relook at the Master Agreement to reflect the changes in the industry and the economy;
- Examine quick solutions that will help the sugar cane farmers; and
- Review the entire industry with the view to transitioning to a new sustainable model.

Growing the small and medium enterprises

Recognizing that:

- a) the small and the micro businesses provide more incomes and jobs than any other sector in Fiji, and
- b) the large number of women that participates in this sector, Unity Fiji will provide jobs through the growth of small and micro enterprises. We will remove the many burdens that shackle the initiatives of small businesses. These burdens come in many forms and include heavy-handed regulations especially licensing and the imposition of high fees. Instead, Unity Fiji will apply a "light touch" to small and micro businesses with emphasis on growth rather than control, regulations, and fees.

To harness the power of small and micro businesses, Unity Fiji will implement the following measures:

- Provide hands-on support and guidance through the ETP platforms above;
- Lighten the regulations of micro and small businesses to promote growth;
- Introduce a staggered system of licensing fees on micro and small businesses above a reasonable threshold;
- Implement a tiered system of minimum wage to meet the capacity of micro and small

enterprises;

- Relook at the need to register for micro and small businesses below a reasonable threshold;
- Provide access to seed capital through the ETP;
- Promote financial literacy through the Reserve Bank of Fiji on savings, budgeting and business continuity; and
- Promote partnership across ethnic groups to take advantage of cultural and community practices that make small businesses successful.

Growing the private sector

The private sector is the engine of growth. They generate employment which reduces poverty. This Government has stunted the growth of the private sector by playing favourites and intervening heavily in the sector. Fiji's ranking in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index has plummeted from 52nd in 2006 to 165th in 2021. The areas that Fiji scored the worse in were access to finance and starting a business.

To grow the private sector, Unity Fiji will:

- Restrict the government's role to setting the regulations and standards in the private sector;
- Make intervention in the tender process by the Ministers transparent;
- Undertake a taxation review to strengthen economic efficiency;
- Provide timely VAT refunds to companies; and
- Review the requirements of the Company's Act to ease the load on the private sector.

Attracting more investment

Investment is essential to grow the economy, provide more jobs and reduce poverty. Investors need economic and fiscal stability. In addition, they thrive in the certainty of government policies and the uniform application of these policies.

To attract more investment, Unity Fiji will:

- Review the incentive system to make them more effective and relevant;
- Provide assurance that policies on investment will not change for the term of the government;
- Apply the laws and regulations equally to all investors, and refine immigration laws and policies;
- Review regulation on piloting innovative start-ups, including the use of the regulatory sandbox platform;
- Develop and encourage innovative capital raising platforms;
- Review and enhance the SME guarantee scheme through the Reserve Bank of Fiji;
- Review commercial banks/credit institutions fees and charges, through the Reserve Bank of Fiji; and
- Re-establish a fully regulated credit bureau.

Saving Fiji from the financial cliff

As our debt continues to soar, Fiji is edging closer to a steep financial cliff. Unity Fiji projects the national debt to be at 95% of GDP at the end of 2022. The Government plans to borrow plenty more this year. Debt repayment is at 42% of total revenue which means that out of every dollar that government gets in revenue, 42 cents is used to pay loans. This leaves only 58 cents for all other government expenditures. Therefore, as this debt repayment increases, less and less money is available to government to spend on other areas. The impact of this crowding out has already been felt in hospitals and schools. This is bound to get worse which may lead to debt default as we now see in Sri Lanka and other countries in the world.

Unity Fiji has unmatched skills in public financial management. To save Fiji from the financial cliff, Unity Fiji will:

- Stop the borrow and spend policy of this Government by reducing wastage and installing a framework where revenue drives the budget;
- Prepare a mini budget depending on the time of the elections;
- Introduce zero-based budgeting in the next budget year;
- Undertake as quickly as possible a thorough expenditure review across all of government;
- Undertake reforms across State Owned Enterprises so that they can stand on their own; and
- Restructure loans where possible.

Easing the traffic congestion

Traffic congestion is getting worse in our cities and towns. Our roads were not designed and built to carry this volume of traffic. Traffic congestion is costly to the country in many areas like fuel consumption, productivity, health, and family time. Yet the government continues to allow and even promote the importation of cars through the reduction in tariffs, while very limited improvements have been made to ease the traffic flows.

Unity Fiji will:

- Ease the flow of traffic immediately by widening roads, removing traffic hinderances like dividers, and redesigning traffic flows to ease the congestion;
- Review the tariffs of all types of vehicles;
- Encourage carpooling and working from home;
- Improve the service delivery of public transport;
- Examine other forms of public transportation where possible; and
- Review the existing road networks in (urban centres).

PILLAR 2: RIGHTS TO SERVICES AND FREEDOMS

Right to quality medical services

Section 38 of the imposed Constitution mandates that the State should take all necessary measures to ensure the right of people to health, adequate facilities, and proper health services. However, our health care system is in crisis. Aging infrastructure and inadequate facilities; shortage of doctors, professional nurses and medications; high staff turnover, and long waiting queues at health centers and hospitals confirm that the Government is not fulfilling the requirements of its own Constitution. The pandemic has further destroyed what was already a broken and inadequate health system. Unity Fiji will restore the confidence in our health system by raising the priority of health services.

Unity Fiji will work to:

- Strengthen the Public Health services by increasing its budget allocation and ensuring that budget is fully and effectively used according to the health priorities;
- Up-grade physical infrastructure and technical infrastructure such as a health information monitoring system;
- Improve health worker to population ratio, address staff shortages and high staff turnover through productive and motivated workforce with a focus on patient rights and customer satisfaction;
- Make available basic medicinal products and equipment for the general public;
- Focus on preventive, curative, and rehabilitative services with priority focus on NCDs (a leading cause of mortality in Fiji), including nutrition, mental health, and injuries; maternal, infant, child and adolescent health; and communicable diseases, environmental health and health emergency preparedness, response and resilience;
- Strengthen information gathering and data collection management system in all areas of health services including NCDs and mental health; and
- Review the abolition of the Director Public Health, Director Clinical and Director Planning positions which have had a direct negative effect on the efficient and effective delivery of public health and clinical services as well as planning and policy including corporate services and support.

Right to clean and reliable water supply

Water is the most essential element in our lives. Section 36 of the imposed Constitution mandates the right of access to water. Therefore, every citizen of Fiji should have access to clean and reliable water supply. However, in many parts of Fiji, people have no access to clean water or face long and frequent disruptions to the water supply. Unity Fiji will ensure that all citizens irrespective of location have access to clean and reliable water supply.

Right to decent housing

Shelter is a basic need. Yet the current government has spent only \$191 million in housing in the last 15 years compared to \$4 billion on the disciplined forces. Unity Fiji's Housing Plan is

the first time in 15 years that a serious effort is being made by a government to deliver on the promise of Section 35 of the imposed constitution for the state to take *"reasonable measures within its available resources to achieve the progressive realisation of the right of every person to accessible and adequate housing and sanitation"*.

Unity Fiji will raise the priority of housing and will implement the following:

- Spend [from savings not borrowings] \$131.6 million a year on housing which is 558.69% more than the current year's \$20 million revised estimate and 997% more than the government's 15-year average of \$12 million;
- Construct 1000 homes per year, including the relocation of informal settlements; and
- Maintain/ Increase assistance for first land purchase and first home purchase.

Right to gender equality and social inclusion

Unity Fiji values the life of every citizen and their contribution to society. It will work towards improving the equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life. This includes the right of access to quality education, health, and employment.

Unity Fiji, in affirming these rights, will:

- Work with the whole of government to mainstream gender;
- Work with the NGOs and civil societies to advocate and enhance awareness of gender-based violence and other social issues; and
- Support initiatives to increase women participation in nation building including parliament.

Right to decent work

Unity Fiji is committed to providing decent work. It will work with partners towards creating opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families.

Unity Fiji will:

- Reinstate the Tripartite Forum as a vehicle where both employers and workers participate in decisions that affect the sustainability of their livelihood;
- Restore the right of workers for collective bargaining and recognize the rights of Trade Unions to represent their members; and
- Review all the laws and decrees relating to trade union;
- Remove the no job, no job policy.

Right to living wages

As the cost of living rises and wages stagnant, the purchasing power of the incomes of people are plummeting. While government has announced its intention to raise the minimum wages to \$4 an hour, it has delayed its implementation to 2023. With prices projected to rise further, 2023 is a long way away.

Unity Fiji will:

- **Raise the minimum wages to \$5 per hour.** To ease the impact on small businesses, the rise in the minimum wages will be in phases to allow businesses time to adjust. Tax rebates may also be considered;
- Initiate training to lift productivity which will include measures to ease the worsening traffic congestion in major cities and towns; and
- Review the ILO conventions that Fiji has signed to increase compliance.

Right to fair working conditions in the civil service

In any situation whether it's in the private or public sector, the relationship between employer and employee must be built on fairness and trust. Unity Fiji appreciates the important role that the public servants play in providing services to the people, advising the Executives, and implementing policies.

Civil servants work under very different environment than those in the private sector. To effectively serve the people, public servants need to play their roles without fear or favour. This will lead to higher quality of decision making and better service delivery. Unity Fiji is concerned with the high degree of intervention by the Ministers on the appointment and functions of civil servants which politicizes their responsibilities to the detriment of their performance. This has led to the low morale of the civil servants due to the uncertainty in appointments, the interventions of political masters, favouritism, and lack of transparency. Yet civil servants are being called to perform under the existing public sector reforms. This is not fair. Furthermore, requiring all civil servants to enter into contracts introduces uncertainties which will affect the quality of their service.

Fiji has a small pool of experienced work force. Yet this Government reduced the retirement age from 60 to 55. In recognition that people at 55 are at the peak of their productivity and skills, the trend around the world is to increase, not decrease, the retirement age.

To create a fair working environment to the civil servants and those in State Owned Enterprises, Unity Fiji will implement the following measures:

- Increase the retirement age from 55 to 60;
- Restore the independence of the PSC in the appointment, transfer, and termination of civil servants;
- Better demarcation of roles between the civil servants and politicians to reduce the intervention of the Ministers in the operational matters of government;
- Limit those under contract to the top three tiers of the civil service;
- Review the civil service reform to raise efficiencies and improve performance across the service, according to legally mandated functions and responsibilities, without fear of unfair recrimination by superiors and ministers; and
- Reduce the political interference by introducing a fair and objective performance appraisal system where the Minister is consulted but not the decision maker.

Empowering our youths

Our youths are facing many challenges in this modern times. The decisions that we take today will affect their lives in future. For instance, they will shoulder the payment of the huge debt that this government has accumulated. They will face the impact of the disjointed and inappropriate education policies. They face the challenge of finding jobs after they leave school.

To empower our youths, Unity Fiji will:

- Give them free education up to tertiary level;
- Forgive the debt on TELS;
- Restore the government grants to the USP;
- Provide them jobs through better economic management;
- Provide them income through the ETP;
- Restore their freedom of expression, assembly, and association;
- Reduce their burden of paying the national debt; and
- Introduce a National Youth training scheme.

Right to retain cultural and ethnic identity

Unity Fiji believes that national unity cannot be legislated. Unity that will last must come from the people. Fiji is a multicultural country. People treasure their culture and tradition. Under its vision of "Unity in Diversity", Unity Fiji will build lasting unity through tolerance and understanding of our differences. We will promote the different cultures and traditions of all the people of Fiji.

Unity Fiji recognises and respects the important position of traditional Chiefs and regrets the disrespectful way that the Great Council of Chiefs has been treated. The Party appreciates the central role of the Chiefs in charting the way forward for Fiji. The Chiefs are an integral part of the culture of the indigenous people in Fiji.

Unity Fiji will:

- Re-establish the GCC to provide leadership to nation building and the social and economic development of the indigenous people;
- Consult widely on the most effective structure of the GCC and the roles that it can play. One of these roles is to drive the change in mindsets and attitudes of the indigenous Fijians to catalyse economic development in their provinces as explained under the ETP;
- Build capacity of our Chiefs to be able to effectively play their assigned roles; and
- Review laws that relate to national unity.

Rights of the indigenous people

Unity Fiji recognises that collective indigenous rights is inclusive of the rights in the Constitution. Unity Fiji believes that all ethnic groups in Fiji have goodwill and respect for one another. They want to live in harmony and peace.

The “ownership” of land in Fiji by the indigenous people is protected under section 28 of the imposed Constitution. However, Unity Fiji notes with grave concern that the control of land has been progressively removed from the landowners through changes to the legislation such as Bill 17, and by the removal of conventions where landowners’ approval were an integral part of the process of land leases. **Ownership without control is meaningless.**

To empower owners and users of resources, Unity Fiji will implement the following measures:

- Reverse all legislations, decrees and administrative policies that have weakened the control of the land by the landowners;
- Increase the allowable tenure to a minimum of 50 years for leases under ALTA, through consultations with the landowners;
- Allow longer leases with appropriate conditions to compensate for the loss of the asset to two generations of landowners;
- Establish a Land Review Commission to examine and resolve land issues including crown land, freehold land, and native land;
- Review the basis of the price of the lease of the land to reflect their market value;
- Rescind the Land Use Decree to strengthen the landowners’ participation in the use of their land through the ETP;
- Redirect TLTB to focus entirely on the interest of landowners;
- Review all relevant legislation to allow TLTB to be independent from government; and
- Facilitate the renewal of leases and assist in the expiry of leases.

Right to social security

The right to social security is mandated by Section 37 of the imposed Constitution. Fiji’s social protection system constitute a ‘destitute allowance’ for the elderly, and a National Provident Fund providing old-age, disability and survivors benefits for those in the formal sector.

Unity Fiji will:

- Continue with the current social welfare schemes and payments;
- Review the social security system in Fiji and develop a high-level framework or strategy guiding social protection expansion;
- Review the level of welfare payment to keep up with the rise in the cost of living;
- Refund the FNPF withdrawals made under COVID-19 facilities for those below an income threshold.

Right to a clean environment

Fiji is a paradise. Unity Fiji is concerned about the serious damage to the environment that this Government has allowed in the name of development. Our pristine reefs and coastline are being destroyed. Mangroves are being cut down. These do not match our international pronouncements on climate change. They have increased our vulnerability to harsh changes in weather and natural disasters.

Unity Fiji supports the concepts and ideals of the green economy and blue Pacific. Drivers of green growth include renewable energy, improved water and waste management, and sustainable fisheries, agriculture, and forest management. Key priorities for the blue economy include using marine resources for development, combating unsustainable and destructive fishing, and managing ocean impacts of climate change.

Unity Fiji will:

- Review the licenses of projects that are causing environment damage to the country;
- Halt the mining exploration in the Nakauvadra mountains;
- Ensure that environmental assessments are rigorous and independent;
- Explore the need for a 'Resource Management Act' that provides a national framework for balancing environmental protection with economic, social, and cultural values;
- Promote sustainable energy policy that promotes growth through increased energy access and security and reduces greenhouse gas emissions through investment in 'green' energy sources such as renewables (hydro, solar, wind, ocean, sustainable biofuel etc);
- Encourage independent power producers (IPPs) that promote renewal sources, concessions on renewal energy equipment, and equitable returns for individual renewal energy systems;
- Encourage conservation and investment in high efficiency appliances and infrastructures such as buildings vehicles and ships through tax concessions and depreciation allowances;
- Promote investment in science and technology;
- Reduce the use of fuel intensive motor vehicles, in alignment to the Paris agreement; and
- Encourage and promote large companies to invest in green and renewable energy to replace the already carbon intensive assets they hold.

Right of persons with disability

The rights of the persons with disability are protected by section 42 of the imposed Constitution. Unity Fiji recognises that the disable members of society must enjoy the same privileges as any other citizens. These rights include but not limited to the right to accessibility, employment and travel.

Unity Fiji will:

- Ensure through the relevant regulations that public building owners provide access to the disabled persons;
- Ensure that the owners of public transport provide access to the disabled persons. The Government will subsidize the cost of these provisions;
- Increase budget allocation to the disability housing assistance;
- Improve and increase education facilities for the disabled;
- Improve the employment of disabled persons; and
- Improve and legislate building access codes (new and existing);

Right to freedoms in the Constitution

A Constitution is the supreme law of a country. However, in Fiji, while the Bill of Rights of the imposed Constitution stipulated the pillars of democracy (free speech, association and publication), at the same time provisions within it and other laws reduce these freedoms. The interpretation of the claw-back clauses that limits these rights can be extremely wide and open to abuse by the government of the day. Unity Fiji will review the laws that limit the freedoms promised under the Constitution to make Fiji a genuinely free and fair country.

To protect the freedom and the rights of people under the Constitution, Unity Fiji will implement the following measures:

- Review the Public Order Decree to restore the freedom of association;
- Review the Media Act to restore the freedom of the press; and
- Specifically define the conditions that limits the rights and freedom of people under the Constitutions and relevant laws.

The people did not participate in the preparation of the imposed Constitution. In addition, this imposed Constitution has not been passed in Parliament. Therefore, Unity Fiji believes that the Constitution is not the people's constitution but that of this Government.

Unity Fiji will:

- Appoint a Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) to review the imposed Constitution. The Commission may refer to the 1997 Constitution and the draft Constitution of the Yash Ghai Commission;
- Form a bipartisan Committee of members of Parliament to review the Report of the CRC and recommend the constitutional changes for amending the imposed Constitution for enactment by the Parliament as a Bill for constitutional amendment which can be passed by a simple majority of the members;
- Appoint a new Electoral Commission to organise a national referendum on the Constitution Amendment Bill. An approval by a majority of voters will be a constitutional authority for the change;
- Appoint a new Human Rights Commission that can be recognised and respected internationally under the Paris Principles; and
- Re-establish the Ombudsman Office.

Right to free and fair elections

Unity Fiji upholds all the pillars of democracy. The most important of these is the right of the people to freely choose their representatives in Parliament. The existing electoral laws deny the rights of voters to have their votes counted if their preferred political party does not get at least 5% of the votes. This is not democracy. Eligible votes must not be discarded.

Furthermore, the total party votes determine the number of Parliament seats allocated to each party. This results in some candidates with only a few hundred votes being in Parliament while others who won more votes are excluded from Parliament. These electoral laws are very unfair to voters and does not support the pillars of democracy.

To empower voters and restore democracy, Unity Fiji will implement the following measures:

- Rescind the current electoral laws and replace them with a fair and just one after a wide and through consultations nationwide;
- Investigate the conduct of the 2014 and 2018 national elections to ensure that the elections were conducted in a fair and free manner;
- Review all the electoral laws to restore fairness to the voters including the removal of the threshold of the total votes required by the party, review of the one national constituency and restoring a caretaker government before elections;
- Review the requirements for registering a new political party; and
- Restore the independence of the Electoral Commission from the Supervisor of Elections and both institutions from government.

Right to national and personal security

Personal and national security is an important pillar of democracy. People must feel secure in their homes, properties, and businesses. True national unity is the essential building block of national security. National unity can only be built from the ground up through greater understanding and tolerance of our differences. We have heard the cry of the people that they have suffered greatly from past political crises. The costs of the political crises to the families are high and our future generations will continue to pay for them. Our wellbeing as a country would have been much higher without these crises. Unity Fiji believes that, with the spirit of our vision of unity, the military's role of upholding peace and security of the country can be reconciled with the wishes of the people. Unity Fiji will promote this national reconciliation with the vision of "Unity in Diversity".

Fiji enjoys ethnic diversity. National unity will be achieved through greater equity in matters that are considered important by each ethnic group. Unity Fiji will protect the cultural identities of all ethnic groups including the minor communities. We will also consider these ethnicities in the distribution of senior positions in the public sector. On personal security, Unity Fiji will work with the police to enhance professionalism in the force and strengthen their policing role. To build lasting national unity, Unity Fiji will:

- Reduce income disparity between ethnic groups through prudent economic management and the ETP;
- Protect and promote the identities of all ethnic groups;
- Rebalance the ethnic distribution of senior positions in the public sector;
- Ensure that the police are adequately resourced to effectively carry out their roles;
- Establish a Police Service Commission (similar to the UK and the state of NSW in Australia) to deal with disciplinary and criminal issues in the Fiji Police Force. Other issues like senior appointment and promotions and dismissals may also be handled by the Police Services Commission
- Up skilling and training of customer oriented/ frontline public servants and PSV operators; and
- After consultations with stakeholders including the disciplined forces, establish a National Security Commission to examine all aspects of national security to avoid future political crisis.

PILLAR 3: ELIMINATING CORRUPTION

Good governance is the cornerstone of true democracy. Unity Fiji believes that being elected by the people, the Government must in turn be transparent and accountable to the people. Good governance is high on the priority of a Unity Fiji Government. We have watched with concern the progressive weakening of the fundamentals of good governance over the last decade. It included the erosion of the independence of public institutions, the cloak of silence of civil servants fearful of their jobs, and the general lack of transparency in the financial status and operations of government. We will restore practices and strengthen institutions that promote transparency and good governance.

To promote good governance and eliminate corruption, Unity Fiji will implement the following measures:

- **Restore the independence of institutions of good governance:** Unity Fiji will restore the independence of the national institutions of good governance and promote a culture of transparency in all spheres of government operations. These include the Constitutional Offices like the Reserve Bank of Fiji (RBF), Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Auditor General, Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption (FICAC), Humans Rights Commission, and the Fiji Elections Office;
- **Review the membership of the Constitutional Offices Commission (COC):** The COC appoints officers that are responsible for safeguarding accountability like the Auditor General. It is therefore extremely essential that the members of the COC are independent of government. The imposed Constitution institutionalizes the Prime Minister and the Attorney General as members of the COC. This is not right. Unity Fiji will initiate the steps necessary to change the members of the COC;
- **Bringing back the Senate:** A Unity Fiji Government will welcome the scrutiny of its decisions. The Senate plays an important part of that scrutiny on behalf of the people. The benefits of administering the Senate far outweigh the cost. Unity Fiji will bring back the Senate. We will consult widely on its role which may include powers to safeguard legislations on ethnic issues from the perspective of national unity;
- **Reduce opportunities for corruption:** Legislations have been enacted that allows one person to make decisions without deference to independent processes and procedures. These unilateral decisions increase the risk of corruption. Unity Fiji will ensure that proper checks and balances are in place before a single person decides on critical matters of the nation. We will review the relevant laws to rescind those that allow unilateral decision-making;
- **Restore transparency of our fiscal position:** Our financial position is an important factor in our economic and social growth and stability. The appalling state of government reporting to Parliament has undermined its credibility and totally eroded the confidence of the public. Unity Fiji will ensure that all statutory and fiscal reports are duly submitted to Parliament and published as required by the Constitution and relevant legislations. Unity Fiji will ensure that fiscal and economic reports comply to international standards and best practices;
- **Strengthen compliance to procurement processes:** Procurement is the heart of any public financial management system and determines the quality, efficiency and value of the

goods and services that are procured for the purposes of government. The government's procurement system must be robust, irreproachable, and practical enough to ensure the delivery of timely, quality and value for money of goods and services to the people of Fiji. To do so, Unity Fiji will revamp the procurement system to embed these fundamental principles of procurement in all relevant legislations and regulations. These will also include principles of transparency which require publishing the intervention by Ministers, and the outcomes of all major procurement decisions undertaken by government. Unity Fiji will also revisit the structure of tender boards, its procedures and oversight;

- **Strengthen parliamentary scrutiny of budgets and audit reports:** Parliamentary scrutiny of government's performance is a fundamental component of any democratic system and for that matter, the basic right of the citizens of Fiji. A Unity Fiji Government will respect the Conventions under the Westminster parliamentary system and uphold the independence and integrity of the roles of Parliamentary Standing Committees; and
- **Reform FICAC to be independent with a new direction to investigate corruption.**

PILLAR 4: HEALING THE WOUNDS OF THE PAST

Unity Fiji believes that to empower the entire nation to move forward towards peace and happiness we must look back and heal the wounds of our past. We believe that if these wounds are not addressed, our future roadmap for peace and unity may be bumpy and rough. Fiji has come through some tumultuous past that have deeply fractured our people. Unity Fiji will start to heal these deep wounds which will liberate the country and facilitate our efforts to unite the nation.

To heal the wounds of the past, Unity Fiji will implement the following:

- Establish a Commission for Peace and Reconciliation as soon as possible after coming into government. We will learn from the other countries that have undertaken such a Commission. The Commission could address the following:
 - i. Address the injustices that people received in the 1987 to 2006 coups; and
 - ii. Correct the injustices of people that were prevented by law to seek redress from Government.
- Review the compensation given to tenants and landowners when the land leases expired in 1999/2000 to ensure that the compensations were properly based and that they were adequate;
- Honour communities with historical contribution to Fiji. Fiji has been blessed with the contribution of Pacific Island communities that have helped build our country. Amongst those that arrived very early in our history are the Melanesians from Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. They helped construct many landmarks in Suva and built roads across Fiji. Many of them and their families have settled in Fiji. We must not leave these communities behind. Unity Fiji will build a Fiji that cares for everyone. Unity Fiji will implement the following:
 - i. Change the official status of Melanesians to iTaukei. They have lived here for generations and have adopted the iTaukei culture and deserve to be called the iTaukei;

- ii. As a matter of appreciation, grant them land where they can settle and raise their families; and
- i ii. Honour them through an annual national day where they can celebrate their history and showcase their original culture.
- Review the field allowances that were not paid to the soldiers on peacekeeping duties in the Middle East from 1978 to May 2002. Fijian soldiers have sacrificed a lot in peacekeeping duties including family breakup. Some have paid the ultimate price. The least that the nation can do is to ensure that they get what they deserved to get; and
- Examine the concerns of the striking workers at the Vatukoula Gold Mine and find solutions acceptable to most.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This Manifesto only covers the main issues that Unity Fiji will change when it becomes government. There are many other issues that Unity Fiji have heard from its consultations with the people that are not mentioned in this Manifesto. We are committed to implementing all these issues.

Unity Fiji is the only opposition party in the history of Fiji that had prepared an Alternative Budget in the last two years. As required by the law, Unity Fiji has estimated the costs of its Manifesto and their impact on revenue, budget deficit and borrowing. The relevant tables are part of this Manifesto. Complying with the law under a budget framework will transparently link this Manifesto to expenditure, revenue, deficit and borrowing.

A plan is only good if it is implemented. Unity Fiji has never been in government before. But we have the leadership credibility, that has demonstrated in the past, that it can be relied upon to deliver on its promises. We can therefore assure the people that Unity Fiji will deliver on its promises. We stake our leadership on this promise. We have proven that we are trustworthy.

Unity Fiji commends this Manifesto to all the people of Fiji.

APPENDICES TO THE UNITY MANIFESTO

It is important that all the budget tables in this Unity Manifesto are read with the following proviso:

1. The Unity Fiji Budget covers the first full year of its operations.
2. The financial projections are based on the information that are publicly available and our own analysis. These projections will be reviewed when Unity Fiji forms government.

Appendix 1: Budget Framework (\$m)

<i>Estimated Revenue</i>	2022/23 Govt Budget	2022/23 Unity Budget (Est)
<i>Direct Taxes</i>	573.8	571.8
<i>Indirect Taxes</i>	1,748.3	1,666.9
<i>Others</i>	363.4	798.4
Total Operating Receipts	2,913.2	3,037.1
Total Investing receipts	26.8	94.6
Total Estimated Revenue	2,939.9	3,131.7
Total Estimated Expenditure VIP	3,812.1	3,910.5
Net Deficit	872.2	778.8
<i>Add Loan repayment</i>	307.5	307.5
Gross Deficit	1,179.7	1,086.3
<i>Local borrowing</i>	676.7	686.3
<i>Foreign borrowing</i>	503.0	400.0
Nominal GDP	11,708.0	11,708.0
Rev/GDP	25%	26.7%
Exp/GDP	32.6%	33.4%
Net Deficit/GDP	7%	6.7%

Source: Government Budget Estimates 2022/2023 and own projections

Appendix 2: Revenue Summary (\$m)

<i>Revenue Estimates</i>	2022/23 Govt Budget	Impact of Unity Manifesto	Unity Budget (Est)
<i>Direct Taxes</i>	573.8	-2.0	571.8
<i>Income Taxes</i>	523.0	-7.3	515.7
<i>Social Responsibility Tax</i>	6.5	5.2	11.7
<i>Fringe Benefit Tax</i>	17.9	0.0	17.9
<i>Capital Gains Tax</i>	26.5	0.0	26.5
<i>Indirect Taxes</i>	1,651.9	15.0	1,666.9
<i>Value Added Tax</i>	925.8	0.0	925.8
<i>Customs Taxes</i>	658.7	15.0	673.7
<i>Water Resource Tax</i>	1.0	0.0	1.0
<i>Departure Tax</i>	65.1	0.0	65.1
<i>Other indirect taxes</i>	1.3	0.0	1.3
<i>TOTAL TAX REVENUE</i>	2,225.7	13.0	2,238.7
<i>Fees, Charges, Fines & Penalties</i>	159.9	5.0	164.9
<i>Sales Revenue</i>	-	0.0	
<i>Grant in Aid</i>	245.0	435.0	680.0
<i>Reimbursements & Recoveries</i>	86.2	0.0	86.2
<i>Other Revenue and Surpluses</i>	32.2	0.0	32.2
<i>TOTAL OTHER OPERATING REVENUE</i>	363.4	435.0	798.4
<i>TOTAL INVESTING REVENUE</i>	94.6	0.0	94.6
<i>TOTAL NON-TAX REVENUE</i>	458.0	435.0	893.0
<i>TOTAL REVENUE</i>	2,683.7	448.0	3,131.7

Source: Government Budget Estimates 2022/2023 and own projections

Appendix 3: Expenditure Summary

<i>Functional Expenditure</i>	2022/23 Govt Budget	Projected Savings	2022/23 Unity Baseline	Impact of Unity Manifesto	Unity Budget (Est)
1. Administrative services	685.6	76.6	609.0	23.0	632.0
2. Social services	1,125.7	0.0	1,125.7	338.0	1,463.7
3. Economic Services	286.8	28.7	258.1	212.2	470.3
4. Infrastructure	637.7	156.5	481.2	304.0	785.2
5. Unallocable	1,065.3	178.2	887.1	272.2	1,159.3
6. Expenditure reforms		600.0	-600.0		-600.0
Total Expenditure (VIP)	3,801.1	1,040.0	2,761.1	1,149.4	3,910.5

Source: Government Budget Estimates 2022/2023 and own projections



Unity
Fiji



PEOPLE
First

UNITY FIJI

"Restoring Hope & Freedom"

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