

Transparency International Fiji

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The Auditor-General releases his report showing more mismanagement in the Public Service

TI Fiji expresses concern at the findings of the Auditor General on Governments Accounts and Finances and apparent mismanagement of public funds and attributes this to the lack of respects for the rule of law, the violation of the Public Service Code of Conduct and its Values and ignorance of the need to properly constitute an integrity pillar of the Nation, namely the Public Accounts Committee.

Suva Fiji Islands, 21st August, 2005. Transparency International Fiji joins the people of Fiji in showing their concern, with respect to the latest report by the Auditor-General, (OAG) which was released in Parliament on Friday (19/08/05) and has been reported widely by the news media.

At first sight the OAG report is actually incredible. Some cases exposed by the OAG, as reported in the media, are blatant violation of common courtesy that the taxpayers of this country deserve and those others that smack of corruption should have been reported by the heads of Ministries concerned direct to the Police for investigation and prosecution. In cases of proven mismanagement, the system must be reviewed and the public officials involved should be subjected to behaviour-changing training, to prevent recurrence in the future.

Transparency International Fiji stresses that established processes that provide the guiding principles of government's financial management must be adhered to at all times by all accounting officers and strictly so, to avoid mismanagement.

Transparency International Fiji wishes to raise some fundamental issues for the people of Fiji to be concerned about.

First, the OAG report is only the first step in a set process that has proven to be very effective over the years and which is a credit to that office. This is why we all seem to become aware of the shortcomings in the administration of our Government's finances.

However the other set procedures which needed to be taken to complete the process are the presentation of these reports to the Public Accounts Committee for stringent scrutiny, and the calling up of public officials to account for their respective actions, by commission or by omission, which resulted in what the OAG has referred to as gross mismanagement. This process when strictly observed would lead to sanctioning that was meant to curb public service misbehavior, and prevent the recurrence of these violations of the rules.

But these latter two steps, we would notice have not been happening effectively over the last decade. We should realise that the Public Accounts Committee, as an important pillar of Fiji's national integrity system has only been activated somewhat seriously in the last twelve months. So if a crucial integrity pillar of our governance has not been functioning properly, we at Transparency International Fiji must regrettably view this as the price we have to pay, when the principles of good governance and administrative best practices are underestimated, downplayed, ignored and/or not observed at all.

Transparency International Fiji further expresses its serious concern at the behavior of the Public Service as reported by the OAG. The Public Service has its code of conduct together with a very workable set of values, to guide its service delivery etched in the Public Service Act of 1999, and it is therefore the right of the people of Fiji to expect the Public Service to strictly adhere to those codes and values and thereby prevent the mismanagement that the OAG has highlighted in his report. We are fully aware furthermore that the Public Service has various regulations in place to guide its service delivery and keep it above board. But the OAG's report unfortunately shows otherwise and this calls for stringent disciplinary action to be taken forthwith and in transparent manners. Such disciplinary actions should be administered in manners that will serve as a deterrent to others.

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