

THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

REPUBLIC OF FIJI

59 - 63 High Street, Toorak, Suva. P. O. Box 2528, Government Buildings, Suva.
Phone: +679 331 0255 Fax: +679 331 9513 Website: www.feo.org.fj

Statement by the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission

Mr Suresh Chandra

SMS Polling Venue Locator Launch

Suva – 08 February, 2018 – 3.00pm



The Electoral Commission Chairperson, My Suresh Chandra at the SMS Polling Venue Locator Launch

Fellow Electoral Commissioners,

Technical Consultants from Overseas,

Representatives from Vodafone and Digicel,

Invited Guests,

Staff of the Fijian Elections Office,

Ladies and gentlemen;

Bula Vinaka and a very warm welcome to you all this afternoon.

Today's launch is a continuation of efforts by the Electoral Commission and the Fijian Elections Office [FEO] to ensure that voters have pertinent information readily available to them.

Polling venue details published as early as February in an election year will allow the General Public ample time to be able to firstly know where they are going to vote.

Secondly, in the event they would like to have it changed, make the necessary applications with the FEO in time for elections.

The important part is that members of the public have to take responsibility to ensure that they have done the necessities for themselves.

Election Management Bodies can only do so much as to tell you where you are currently placed and also give you an opportunity to be able to make changes to your registration details to enable you to vote at a place you feel is more convenient to you.

One of the basic tenets of a free and fair election is to allow convenience in voting, we recognize this and as such Fijians will be given the opportunity to decide where they want to vote and it is our duty to then make it happen.

The release of the voter list this early can only be possible with the fully functioning elections office throughout the term post-election.

We have recently noticed that uninformed persons and individuals are seeking explanation as to what an Election Management Body does post elections.

Congratulations Madam, Sir, here is one example. Voter registration is a continuing exercise and polling stations identification and arrangements are an ongoing exercise to ensure that when the election is called, voters have the latest details updated on the voter register.

At the same time, as many as necessary polling stations are available for them to vote in.

One cannot on one hand benefit from the information we have been regularly publishing and in the same breath, question why the documents have been prepared and what is the purpose of having it.

So ladies and gentlemen, I think it is a thing of the past to continue to argue the reasons for the continuation of the elections office post an election.

In fact, it is now an international move to try and promote the existence of an Election Management Body throughout an electoral cycle to ensure the electoral development and innovation as well as best practices are adopted and implemented as per the style of the country in all countries.

This only improves the standard of elections by affecting positively the standard of the democracy of the country.

Before I conclude, I want to also mention that as we are approaching the date on which Elections is announced, we have noted that the election plans are on par and that if there are no surprises along the way, the Electoral Commission expects the FEO to be ready as early as 1st of April and to wait for the announcement of a date for the General Election.

I urge all Fijians to please check their voting details and until April, you have a good amount of time to change your details and be ready with us to wait for the General Election.

Thank you and Vinaka Vakalevu.

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