

Statement by the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission – KYE Awareness Campaign Launch

Statement by the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission

Mr Suresh Chandra

Know Your Election Awareness Campaign Launch

GPH – Suva – 14th March, 2018 – 9.00am



The Electoral Commission with the Supervisor of Elections at the unveiling of the Election Information Booklet

Fellow Electoral Commissioners, Representatives of the Diplomatic Corp, The Supervisor of Elections, Distinguished Invited Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen.

Ni sa Bula Vinaka and a very good morning to you all.

Ladies and gentlemen, this morning, we launch a nationwide voter awareness campaign called '**Know Your Election**' that will run for six weeks.

While we do not know the date of election yet, we want to be prepared ourselves and we want the voters to be educated and knowledgeable before a date is announced.

Voter education is a major contribution to electoral integrity. The **‘Know Your Election’** campaign will disseminate balanced, non-partisan and objective information on what voters need to know in order to exercise their right to vote.

The Fijian Elections Office has produced the *Election Information Booklet* which provides information on voters’ rights and obligations in the electoral process and explains the importance and process of voting.

Voters need to be educated about the electoral process to help them become an informed voter and **every** Fijian Voter should have at least perused through one *Election Information Booklet* before they reach the polling station.

At the least, we want the voter to have read **page 17** which details how to **mark a ballot paper correctly**. That is either **circle, or cross or tick** one box on the ballot paper.

It is not just about the politics or the political rhetoric. It is about the voter **independently** being able to **make a selection based on factual information**.

It is about a voter knowing **HOW TO DEAL** with a ballot paper and **HOW IMPORTANT THE DEAL** with the ballot paper is before dropping it in the ballot box.

It is about dealing with the nervousness that comes around selection. It comes around the voters conscious and it is also about the voter thinking about the future.

The Vote that is cast on the day of elections matters **for the next four years** or maybe thereafter. But it is more crucial for those four years.

A vote that a voter casts on that day goes to a politician and political party but **impacts the nation**.

The Voter should not be threatened, intimidated or unduly influenced but rather should make a conscious decision based on their **own analysis and preference**.

No one should dictate to a voter how the preference should or can be made. There are many preferred ways but we are not going to get into that.

What we want to do is that once the Voter has made their mind they should have enough capacity to translate that thought or choice into the election result.

It is not for a politician for then to assume that – ‘yes this is a voter who is my son and walked into a polling station and he will voter for me’.

That is why we create such a systematic platform that once a voter is inside a polling station, **they are devoid of any relationship, connection or bond**.

They are able to walk to a cardboard voting screen, free from all the pressure and tension, directly with their ballot paper and themselves, mark their vote, fold their ballot paper, ink their finger and decide for the country.

That is what the voter does.

Inside a polling station is an atmosphere of calm, peacefulness, and quiet so that once the voter has decided to venture into making a decision for the country, **no external factor can control the voter but the voters own thoughts and preferences.**

Ladies and gentlemen, at the end of this campaign, registered voters, potential voters and members of the public should know;

- The role of the Fijian Elections Office;
- The role of the Electoral Commission;
- The Electoral system;
- About Voter registration;
- About the Methods of voting;
- About how the Counting of Ballot Papers is conducted;
- About the Declaration of Results; and
- About the Allocation of seats.

Before I conclude ladies and gentlemen, I would like to announce that the Electoral Commission has set a theme for the election this year:

The 2018 General Election is a platform for Fijians to express their will with confidence, security and freedom.

To the people, we want you to know and understand that this is your election. Be confident when making a choice on the ballot paper. We will ensure you have no reason to feel insecure. And you are free to make your own decisions.

Thank you, Vinaka Vakalevu and Dhanyabadh.

...ends...