

Statement by the Chairperson of the Election Commission

Mr Suresh Chandra

2018 General Election Preparation Update to CSOs

FEO HQ – 24 May, 2018

Ni sa Bula Vinaka and a very warm welcome to the Fijian Elections Office Ladies and Gentlemen.

The Electoral Commission and the FEO is taking all the necessary steps to ensure that the 2018 General Elections will be free and fair for all.

You will learn from the presentations after this some of the steps we have taken to continuously strive to raise the standards in our operations and preparations.

While we do our part, we hope that everyone else plays their part with the same vision and with vested integrity and responsibility.

For those of you present here today, we would like you to take back with you the responsibility of passing on the knowledge from this presentation to you work colleagues, to your friends, to your family and possibly to your respective communities.

It is not very difficult, you have been given copies of the Elections Information Booklet, Polling Agents Handbook, Candidates Handbook and the Media Handbook.

These publications have been designed to provide apolitical information for the sake of ensuring that the readers get some basic knowledge on each of those topics.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Election Information Booklet is one of those books that details all the basic aspects of the election which a voter needs to know.

It contains information such as how to vote, when to vote, where to vote and what happens inside a polling station.

Anyone voting for the first time and who does not know what to do - will learn how to vote from this booklet.

Another thing which we want voters to know is that nobody can force them to vote for a certain person. Your vote is your choice and no one will hold you responsible for the vote you cast because no one has to know who you voted for.

That is what we call the secrecy of the ballot. It is just the voter at the cardboard voting screen, **ALONE**, with a ballot paper and pen.

No one will see the number that you mark on the ballot paper as you will fold it before you put it in the ballot box.

Ladies and gentlemen, finally, I would like to leave you with the message that the Election Commission and the FEO want the 2018 General Election to be a platform for Fijians to express their will with confidence, security and freedom.

Vinaka Vakalevu.