

**A Report by Commissioner Nemani Mati on the Fijian Elections Office (FEO)
Fiji Citizen Voter Registration Exercise in Apia Samoa, 8/10 – 11/10/ 25.**

1. A group of six officers comprising four personnel from the FEO and two personnel from the Department of Immigration made up the Voter Registration Exercise Team. After settling into our different accommodations, we met later in the evening and proceeded to the home of the President of the Fijian Association in Apia, a Rotuman gentleman and their members for a meet and greet session, the presentation of the traditional *i sevusevu*, rounds of kava bowls, followed by an excellent dinner.
2. Also present at this gathering was the Roving Ambassador to the Pacific Islands, Mr. William Toganivalu, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Protocol Officer, a certain Mr. Maciu whose surname, unfortunately, I cannot recall. Mr. Toganivalu joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after a 16-year stint in the British Army Services.
3. Opening remarks by the Roving Ambassador, was followed by comments from the FEO Director Operations, Ms. Anaseini Senimoli on the purpose of our visit. The FEO and Immigration teams then set to work immediately to register voters and deal with those who required birth certificates, a necessary and critical element in the drive to register voters for the upcoming Fijian national election. Applications were also accepted for passport renewals and first-time passport holders. Thus the teams' first night out in Apia was a fairly productive one.
4. I retired early for the night, had dinner and asked Daniel to drive me to my accommodation at The White House Hotel, a modest, white, rambling double, story wooden building, located within the vicinity of Apia's business centre.
5. The Director Operations, Ms. Senimoli, the driver Daniel and the young female FEO officer were accommodated separately at an apartment.
6. The two male officers from the Department of Immigration were also accommodated separately.
7. Based on a pre-arranged timetable both teams set out on the afternoon of Thursday 9 October for a bit of sightseeing and more importantly to locate the proposed venue of the Fiji Day Celebrations on the next day, Friday the 10th of October.
8. The venue, located along the same road leading to the USP Alafua Campus, is a large school assembly hall within the compound of the *Celestians of Don Bosco*, a Catholic priestly order specializing in technical education, rather like the Montfort Boys Town Technical College in Veisari.
9. As news had spread on the purpose of the teams' visit to Apia, a considerable number of Fijian nationals turned up at this venue not only to assist in cleaning and decorating the venue but also to register as voters,

apply for birth certificates, renewals and new passports. This exercise continued well into the night.

10. The Fiji Day celebrations in Apia started in the afternoon of Friday 10th October and also continued well into the night. There were speeches, classic Samoan dance performances, electronic party music provided by a Suva-based Fijian DJ, drinks, food, renewals of friendships, family and professional ties and speeches and toasts invoking memories of Fiji's sometimes turbulent history; those days gone by and those of our leaders and elders, both cultural, social, religious and political who have shaped and built our nation in the last 55 years since independence in 1970.
11. As the Fiji Day celebration continued on into the warm Apia night, the FEO and Department of Immigration teams, set up tables and chairs outside and close by the entrance to the main venue to continue their work on the registration of voters, applications for birth certificates, new passports and renewals.
12. I stayed on for a short while to witness and support the work of the Voter Registration Exercise Team before asking Daniel to drive me to my accommodation.
13. Then the unexpected happened to me on the next day. In hindsight, I now realize that I was programmed to depart Apia Airport for Nadi Airport at around 4.20 AM on Saturday 11th October. Unfortunately I had neither read Eric Drodrolagi's brief regarding the travelling arrangements nor the details on my electronic ticket because I had left behind, both my laptop and telephone, at my home in Nakasi.
14. Instead I erroneously assumed, based on my previous visit to Apia as part of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Observer Team to the 29 August 2025 Samoa National Elections, that I would be travelling on the afternoon's return flight to Nadi Airport at 4.55 pm on Saturday 11th October.
15. Therefore, I did turn up at the Apia Airport on Saturday 11th October at around 10 AM only to be politely informed by the Desk Officer managing check-ins that I had missed the morning flight at 4.20 AM. Apparently there was no afternoon flight on Saturday 11th October.
16. I immediately requested the Desk Officer managing check-ins to call Fiji Airways, inform them of my current predicament and to kindly make alternative arrangements for my return travel to Fiji, which they did in record time.
17. With Eric Drodrolagi's usual behind the scene fastidious support and work ethic, I was then booked to depart Apia Airport for Nadi Airport at 4.20 AM on Sunday 12th October.
18. For this uncharacteristic error of judgement and decision making on my part, I wholeheartedly apologize for the inconvenience I have caused to the FEO and the Electoral Commission.
19. As for my new departure timetable, I must confess, I diligently and humbly adhered to it.

20. And so here I am, safely and securely reporting from the comfort of my home in Nakasi.