Labour

Putting People First

Fiji Labour Party
2014 Election Manifesto

Our beautiful Fiji: Let us together reclaim it for our people

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"With humility and honesty, that is part of our living tradition, we must serve the people of the land.

That challenge is for all of us. National development plans must ensure that the interests of our masses become paramount. If our ordinary people lose faith through unfair and inequitable policies, then the future is fraught with uncertainties.

We must restore the faith of our people in democracy ... above all, in Fiji”

Dr. Timoci Bavadra
First Labour Prime Minister 1987

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Dear Voter

I present to you Labour’s manifesto for the 2014 general elections. It is a rescue package for our ailing nation.

It is a well thought out and visionary document that endeavours to address the pain and suffering inflicted on our people through almost 8 years of misrule by a military-backed regime.

The economy has seen gross mismanagement, corruption is rife, there is mounting social distress, as you all know, but equally serious is the blow that has been inflicted on our national ethos and sense of self respect as a people.

As a nation we had come a long way, despite several coups, in achieving rights and freedoms for our people that are readily enjoyed by those living in advanced democratic societies. Many of these rights were secured through hard fought battles staged by your politicians, trade unionists and other human rights activists.

Many of these rights are now removed with a stroke of the pen through the imposition of harsh, repressive decrees that prescribe heavy penalties for any breach. We are being ruled by fear and intimidation – not through consultation and consensus. Severe media censorship has prevented the true state of our nation getting through to the people.

Against this climate of repression, fear and domination we are expected to go to the polls to elect a government of our choice – after eight years of dictatorial rule.

Political parties have placed before you their policies, should they be elected. But, party manifestos will serve little purpose if the general elections are not to be free, fair and credible. All indications up till now are that it may not be so. We have outlined on Page 4 the reasons why we consider the process to be too tainted to be credible. As voters, you must take note of the blatant manipulation of the electoral process by the regime. The point is, that the 2014 elections do not conform to the internationally accepted standards for free, fair and credible elections.

Dear Voter, our nation today stands at a crucial cross-roads – your vote will decide whether Fiji remains mired in repressive rule and continued assault on our human rights, by an elite minority of self-serving individuals who flout all the rules of good governance.

Or will you vote for the liberal forces of democracy, enlightenment, good governance, social justice and the rule of law.

In short, the September elections are all about democracy vs dictatorship. You have a responsible choice to make. Vote wisely.

Mahendra P. Chaudhry
Labour Leader
Why the 2013 Constitution must be rejected

It is an imposition on the people of Fiji.

It is undemocratic and merely entrenches the old order established since April 2009 and is meant to consolidate the regime’s hold on power. It contains no input from the public at large and does not reflect the will of the people.

It continues the absolutism Fiji has experienced in the past 7 years under the regime:

• All draconian decrees enforced since 2009 continue in force, and override the human rights provisions of the constitution, violate core international conventions and instruments on the basic rights of the people.

• It does not observe the doctrine of separation of powers between the executive, legislature and the judiciary. The Judiciary remains compromised with the Attorney General retaining influence over the appointments of judges, magistrates, the Chief Justice, the Solicitor General and the Director of Public Prosecutions.

• Civil, political, human and trade unions rights embodied in the Bill of Rights are effectively derogated with the continued enforcement of the draconian decrees.

• The ban on trade unionists to participate in the political life of the nation remains.

• It lacks provisions requiring transparency and accountability in the affairs of the State: the pillars of good governance.

• It concentrates wide powers in the hands of the Prime Minister and the Attorney General to the exclusion of checks and balances against abuse of such process.

• Free, fair and credible elections cannot be held under this constitution because the Electoral Commission and the Supervisor of Elections continue to be beholden to the Attorney General, and not independent as is the requirement under democratic norms.

• It removes the privileged status given to Land issues in all previous Fiji constitutions, creating acute insecurity among both the landowner and the tenant communities.

• It lacks any provisions to protect the rights of women.

Labour will review the 2013 constitution, revoke all harsh decrees that impinge on human rights and reinstate the GCC.

Why 2014 elections cannot be regarded free, fair and credible

X one-day polling

X secrecy surrounding the National Register of Voters (NRV) and withdrawal of the public’s right to make objections to voter registrations;

X the use of numbers to identify candidates on the ballot paper instead of names and Party symbols as has been past practice;

X frequent amendments to the Electoral Decree - changes slipped in surreptitiously without any public explanations; the blanket immunity granted to the Electoral Commission and the Supervisor of Elections and their staff and officials against any criminal or civil proceedings in the execution of their duties;

X obvious reluctance on the part of the Electoral Commission to uphold the independence and integrity of the electoral process despite its blatant abuse by the regime;

X questions surrounding the safety and security of ballot boxes

X the absurdity of the elections being under the ministerial charge of the secretary general of the regime’s political party, Fiji First, who is also a party candidate for elections.

X The regime keeps changing the rules governing the elections

These are all highly disturbing developments. In short, this election does not conform to international standards on the conduct of free, fair and credible elections.
Getting the Economy back on track

“The economy built on consumption and heavy borrowings is unsustainable. The regime’s gross mismanagement and exploitation of our economy must stop.”

You can rely on Labour for competent and prudent management of the economy: In one year in 1999/2000 the Labour Government turned the economy around from negative to 9.6% growth with all sectors showing above-record performance and State finances showing a surplus.

Labour’s package for economic growth:
Delivering on our national and social policies depends on strong economic growth. They are all inter-related aspects of national development.

Labour believes that given a stable democratic environment and honest and competent leadership with policies that ensure good governance and inspires investor confidence in Fiji’s future, the economy will automatically pick up. This election is thus vital for the well-being of our beloved nation.

Growing the economy again means:

• Reviving agriculture
• Sustainable Fisheries and Forestry development
• Creating favourable Industrial and Business environment:

✓ Labour will bring down the cost of doing business in Fiji - electricity and telecommunications charges will be reduced. Numerous other hidden charges imposed by the regime will be reviewed, particularly where VAT is also applicable.
✓ Labour will review bank fees/charges; reduce stamp duty
✓ Labour will redirect the Commerce Commission’s oversight role to concentrate on ensuring fair competition practices rather than stifling businesses through over-regulation
✓ Labour will review fees, charges and licensing requirements applicable to small businesses and grant appropriate relief and incentives to encourage greater participation in this sector
✓ Labour will set up a Special Fund to encourage self-employment particularly for our young skilled, professional graduates
✓ Labour will actively pursue investment to boost employment opportunities and enhance incomes.
✓ Labour will review the application of the Capital Gains Tax which is stifling investment in real estate development
✓ Labour will reduce the cost of capital for business expansion projects through a special fund for the purpose
✓ Labour will establish a Foreign Investment Review Board to scrutinise foreign investment, acquisitions and ownership of small businesses by foreigners. This is intended to ensure that the interests of local communities are protected from unfair practices

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Regime’s Mismanagement of the Economy

X 6 years of negative growth with key sectors showing sharp decline:
sugar 50%
fisheries 49%
gold 43%
lumber 25%

X Exports are half of imports
X Recent growth is driven by the regime’s huge spending on road works, and not growth in the productive sectors of the economy

X Nation living on borrowed money - $1 billion earmarked for roads are borrowed and will have to be repaid by future generations

X public debt stands at $5b

X No accountability or transparency on how public money is spent:
Auditor General’s reports and government accounts and finances not published since 2008
- no accountability on how the $1b for road works is being spent

X One-off tax cuts offset by hidden taxes/charges
Labour will reverse Fiji’s rural decline

Revitalising Fiji’s rural economy is a critical challenge. Labour intends to address it as a matter of urgency.

*Rural neglect* in the past 8 years, coupled with the sharp decline in major agricultural commodities such as sugar cane and copra, has resulted in a highly depressed rural sector and a high rate of rural-urban migration.

*Rural Poverty* is at a record high with 70% of our people in rural areas now classified as “poor”. Depopulation of our rural sector is a major worry. In the North, in particular, whole settlements have been abandoned with people moving to Viti Levu in search of a better future. Rural population has declined 20% in the past decade from 65% in 2003 to 50% (2009) or even less now.

*Rural enhancement has been a central focus of Labour’s platform for social and economic development since 1985. We plan to combat rural stagnation, unemployment, the squatter problem and rural poverty through an integrated approach.*

- Priority will go to rehabilitating the sugar and copra industries, while actively promoting other agricultural activities to enhance incomes and create jobs.

- Central to Labour’s package is the creation of **agricultural estates** in various parts of the country. This will be 3-5 acre fully serviced lots with subsidized housing. Resettled families will engage in commercial agriculture suited to the region. The State will provide all necessary infrastructure and marketing assistance.

- Focus will be on reviving rice farming where suitable and promoting livestock husbandry - cattle, pigs, goats, sheep, poultry etc; with all necessary technical assistance provided. Cost of initial farm inputs, fertilisers etc will be State subsidized.

- Labour will also assist in establishing commercial farms for our major fruits – mangoes, guava, mandarins, oranges, pawpaws, pineapples, breadfruit and jackfruit for export as well as agro-processing.

**Rural Infrastructure**

- Labour will restore the Sigatoka rail bridge to revive cane farming in the Olosara Sector.

- Labour will provide adequate funds for the proper maintenance and upgrading of all rural roads, bridges and crossings, including cane access roads. The existing practice requiring community contribution for so-called “non-government” roads will be abolished.
The Sugar Industry

“The sharp decline in the sugar industry in the past 7 years has contributed significantly to high levels of rural poverty.”

Labour’s package of reforms for the sugar industry:

- **Labour’s** first priority will be to pay growers a fair price for their cane, based on cost of production. **Growers will get a minimum guaranteed cane price of $85 per tonne.** This will be reviewed periodically to take account of cost escalations.

- **Labour** will reform the harvesting and transport systems to make these cost-effective to farmers and the industry as a whole. This will be done through contract harvesting and transport arrangements which will be jointly administered by the Fiji Sugar Corporation and the Sugar Cane Growers Council. Growers who wish to harvest and transport their own cane independently will be accommodated within the system.

- **Labour** will provide tangible assistance to growers to increase their crop size. A comprehensive crop rehabilitation programme similar to that undertaken by the Labour government in 1999 will be reintroduced to enhance production.

- **High cost of fertilizer** and other farm inputs is prohibitive, forcing growers to economize on the use of fertilizer to the detriment of the crop. Labour will look at ways of reducing the price.

- **Deductions from cane proceeds** for harvesting, fertilizer etc will be spread evenly through the payment system. This will be a welcome departure from the current practice of recovering the charges from one or two payments.

- **Lorry Transport Allowance** will be reviewed and adjusted periodically to take account of rising costs.

- **Labour** will upgrade and extend the rail infrastructure with emphasis on increasing the ratio of cane transported by rail.

- **Labour** will return to the Sugar Cane Growers Fund the $14.7 m of its money which the Bainimarama administration had converted from loan to equity in the South Pacific Fertilizer Ltd, a company that was insolvent at the time.

- **Industry institutions** (SCGC, SCOF, FSM) disbanded by the Bainimarama administration will be reinstated to give a voice to the farmers in the management of the industry.

- **The European Union** will be approached to render special assistance to the industry in light of Fiji having forfeited its right to access some $430m in aid available under EU’s Alternative Measures Programme, because of Bainimarama regime’s failure to hold elections in 2009.

- **Lease renewals** for cane farms will be government’s responsibility as will be the payment of renewal premiums.
**Copra Industry**

Fiji once produced over 40,000 tonnes of copra annually. Today we are down to a 6500 tonnes. Virtually little has been done over the years to rejuvenate this industry. In the last 8 years, Agriculture Budgets have made little reference to it. There is no sustained replanting programme or even any serious effort to assist plantation owners to revive the industry. **Labour** sees it as a challenge which must be tackled successfully for the benefit of our people in the outer islands. Labour will give it utmost priority and will seek assistance to design, fund and implement a rehabilitation programme for the industry’s revival.

**Fisheries**

Fisheries is another deeply troubled sector. Exports have declined almost 50% in the past 3 years. The tuna industry is close to collapse with almost 75% of domestic tuna fleet vessels having ceased operations. Two major local companies this year laid off hundreds of their workers.

The problem is largely two-fold:

i. Declining tuna species as a result of over-fishing of Fiji’s EEZ by foreign-owned vessels; locals are unable to compete with foreign-subsidised fleet;

ii. Excessive issue of domestic licences often to foreign-owned vessels posing as charter boat operators

**Labour will endeavour to revive the fishing industry:**

- **Adopting a regional approach** to dealing with the problem of over-fishing. The Pacific region provides 60% of the global tuna catch. But stocks are decreasing significantly as a result of plundering by more than 3000 fishing vessels operating in the region. Attempts by small island nations to implement effective conservation and management programmes have largely failed because of opposition from the big players – US, China, S. Korea, Taiwan, Japan and Europe.

- Fiji will take on a strong role at the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency and the WCPFC (Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission) to push for the adoption of effective, long term conservation and management programmes to ensure the sustainability of the Pacific tuna stock

- **Labour will renew the milling equipment.** The existing mill machinery is outdated and badly maintained. This has contributed significantly to unacceptable levels of wastage in the milling process.

- **We will mount effective policing of our territorial waters to guard against poaching by foreign-owned vessels**

- **Labour will re-focus on reviving rice farming particularly to promote development in the North from Bua to Dreketi where once rice was a major crop. This will require a significant change in the attitude and focus of Agricultural officials as well as farmers.**

- The canal system will be rehabilitated for irrigated rice farming – the irrigation system in areas such as Muanidevo and Nasarowaqa have been left abandoned.

- **Labour will introduce mechanized harvesting to counter labour shortage and cut costs**

- **Labour will modernize the milling equipment.** The existing mill machinery is outdated and badly maintained. This has contributed significantly to unacceptable levels of wastage in the milling process.

- **Labour will undertake a comprehensive review of the operations of Rewa Rice**
Land Transport Authority

Fiji Labour Party has been receiving countless complaints from motorists and members of the public about what they claim to be the “bullying” tactics of the Land Transport Authority (LTA).

It seems the LTA has been unleashed on the roads to police, penalize and harass drivers, through unjustifiable penalties. LTA fees and charges are unreasonably high in the context of an average driver’s income.

Of utmost concern, is the defect notice fine of $14.50 for even the most minor defects. In the past, motorists driving with a defective park light, for instance, would be required to fix it and report to LTA. Now they face a spot fine. The appalling condition of Fiji’s roads take a heavy toll on vehicles and minor defects in vehicles occur on a routine basis. Motorists should not be unduly penalized for bad road conditions.

LTA definitely needs an attitudinal change. It was created to assist motorists and keep our roads safe. But it has, instead, become a penal institution with a culture of harassment and intimidation. It proudly boasts from time to time about the high number of bookings for traffic infringements.

LTA’s daily road inspections are a nuisance and cause serious inconvenience to the travelling public. There have also been reports of corrupt practices with some prosecutions to date.

LTA has earned the unsavoury reputation of becoming just a money-making agency. The reduction of speed limits on trunk routes such as the Suva-Nausori highway, to an unreasonably low 50km per hour is no doubt designed as a revenue measure.

Labour will carry out a comprehensive review of the Land Transport Authority and its operations, including all fees and charges which place an intolerable burden on vehicle owners.

✓ Labour will scrap the unpopular Road User Levy. Motorists are already heavily taxed.
✓ Labour will remove the defect notice fine of $14.50.
✓ Labour will revise all fees and charges levied by LTA to make them fair to motorists.
✓ Labour will increase the speed limit on our highways to ensure better flow of traffic without endangering road safety
✓ Labour will rationalize the issuing of taxi permits. It has been noticed that permits are being issued unfairly. Some big companies or individuals own over 100 permits and use these to engage contract drivers on unfair terms
✓ Labour will redistribute taxi permits in a fair manner so that contract drivers also have the opportunity to become taxi owners.
✓ Labour will review the frequency of vehicle inspection checks so that motorists are not ‘harassed’ on a daily basis
Infrastructure
Fiji’s roads and bridges are in an appalling state of disrepair despite $1bn earmarked for road works by the regime since last year and the introduction of a road levy in 2010.

There is, of course, no accountability for the annual road levy which is supposed to rake in an estimated $12m a year. Nor is there any indication as to how the $1bn allocated to the Fiji Roads Authority is being spent and whether the money has been made available.

There is little visible sign of any improvement to most of the roads except for highways and some urban trunk routes that are easily visible. In Suva many of the roads built in the colonial era have been disintegrating for years and have become heavily corrugated as foundations are washed away. Pot holes get patched up giving a checkered look to the surface. There has been no rehabilitation or upgrading of these roads for years.

In Labasa, the Main Street particularly near the Market area is riddled with pot holes. In most rural areas, roads remain in a poor state with no sign of any effort made to carry out maintenance works.

Our key bridges suffer a similar fate. A number of bridges on our main roads and highways are now either closed to traffic or put on restricted usage.

In Suva, the Stinson Parade and Fletcher Road bridges have been closed for almost 3 years. The Fletcher Road bridge has now been replaced with a single lane Bailey bridge which is causing serious traffic holdups during peak hours.

The bridge at Ra, next to the Navutulevu Village, has been closed for almost 2 years, forcing people to take a detour of almost 4 kilometres through the dusty Penang Mill road. Taken over a period this adds significantly to fuel costs for motorists, who use the road regularly.

The Tavua bridge is now a single lane thoroughfare, causing delays and inconvenience which escalate with the onset of the cane crushing season.

In Nadi, the Navo Bridge just outside the town is structurally unstable requiring humps to be constructed on either approaches to slow down the traffic.

In Ba, the use of Koronubu Bridge is now restricted to vehicles of no more than 3.5 tonnes, causing much inconvenience to thousands who travel this route by bus each day. They have to alight at each end of the bridge, cross it on foot and then board the bus at the other end.

This is irrefutable proof of gross negligence of our infrastructure under the Bainimarama regime.
The Health Care System

People have lost faith in Fiji’s Health Care System. Eight years of the Bainimarama regime has seen a shocking decline in the delivery of our health services as a result of serious staff shortages and mismanagement.

There has been an alarming increase in hospital deaths due to neglect, a lack of proper drugs and equipment and shortage of doctors and medical personnel to attend to patients in emergency situations. People are known to have died while waiting in Outpatient queues.

Shortage of doctors and para medics, vital drugs, basic equipment and medical supplies have become chronic. The situation has been made worse by the purchase of cheap, inferior quality drugs and supplies.

What will the Labour Party do to improve Health Care?

Labour believes that all our citizens, rich or poor, deserve high quality health care. Labour has an integrated plan to improve public health care and invest in our hospitals and clinics.

- Labour will undertake a study to establish a National Health Scheme similar to medicare in Australia
- Management of specialist and divisional hospitals such as CWM, Lautoka, Labasa and Nadi will be contracted out to private health care providers to raise the standard of curative health care. There will be no job losses. Full fledged hospitals will be constructed in Nasinu and Ba.
- Contracting out management will bring in expertise and technology not usually available through the public service system
- More specialist doctors will be recruited under special arrangements to overcome skills scarcity in this area
- Adequate funds will be provided for the upgrading of facilities and urgent maintenance work in hospitals and health centres
- Labour will lay greater emphasis on primary or preventive health care. A vigorous campaign will be directed against the increasing incidence of substance abuse such as yaqona, alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, which are major causes of illnesses among our people
- Focus will be placed on the preventive aspects of lifestyle diseases such as hypertension and coronary diseases, diabetes, and kidney failure. The campaign to create awareness will be undertaken at school and community levels.
- Fees and Charges – Labour will ensure that no-one is denied proper medical attention because of inability to meet fees and medical charges. The regime has imposed increased fees and charges on a number of services. Some of these are unaffordable by people with low incomes. Labour will review these fees and charges.

Shockling Health Statistics

Disease outbreaks are getting more frequent and intense. Dengue epidemic earlier this year was the worst ever with more than 30,000 cases and 15 deaths. Degenerative or lifestyle diseases are taking a heavy toll with people dying young. The statistics are shocking – only 16% of our population live past the age of 50 and 8% past 60 years. High incidence of non-communicable diseases with our adult mortality rate 3 times higher than that of Australia and New Zealand.

- 19% of the population suffer from hyper-tension; one-third of all deaths are attributable to heart-related problems. In the 40-59 age group, this is almost half of all deaths.
- the incidence of diabetes in Fiji is reportedly the third highest in the world on a per capita basis.
- Little progress in meeting Millennium Development Goals in terms of mortality rates:
  - Maternal Mortality: 26 per 100,000 live births against MDG target of 10.3. It was 27 in 1990.
  - Infant Mortality Rate static at 19 per 1000 live births between 2009 and 2013, x 3 the MDG target of 5.6. Child Mortality Rate :19.3 in 1995 to 22.4 per 1000 live births - double MDG target of 9.3.
Education for Fiji’s Future

Education is a basic right of every child. It is also a necessary pre-requisite for national development. Through education we can effectively address social problems such as poverty, unemployment, high crime rate and delinquency.

Our present education system and policies need to be redirected to meet the needs of a modern, democratic and progressive Fiji. Over the last 8 years the regime had drastically reduced the education Budget and neglected to focus on the quality of education and the teaching aspect.

Despite the populist vote buying measures of free bus fares and fee free education introduced just before elections, the cost of education continues to be a major burden for parents. An FLP government will address these issues.

FLP’s Education policies

- Labour will introduce a fee-subsidy scheme for approved degree/diploma courses; with the possibility of it replacing the Student Loan Scheme Labour introduced in 1999.
- Labour will, meanwhile, review the Student Loan Scheme in light of rising costs of education. Students who successfully complete their courses will have the loan repayment cut by 50%.
- Labour will ensure that State scholarships are means-tested and fairly distributed among the various ethnic communities; priority will be given to disciplines relevant to the needs of national development.
- Labour will continue with fee-free education but will also provide for a part of the money to be given directly to the deserving parents so that they can use it more flexibly in the overall education of their children.
- Labour will permit the school management to use the grant money for improving or upgrading its facilities without restricting its use, as is currently the practice.
- Labour will explore the possibility of our large, well-equipped schools to be accredited to recognized universities, both local and abroad, to reduce the high cost of university education.
- Labour will reintroduce final examinations at all terminal classes and forms for progress to the next. The current curriculum which allows students to progress all the way up to form seven without having to pass final exams in each form, is the major contributing factor to the turnout of low quality high school graduates.
- Take a critical look at the national curriculum to determine its relevance to the modern needs of education and to improve the quality of learning.

The truth about the regime’s so-called “free education policy”?

- Funded on a per capita basis, the policy benefits the bigger urban schools that have a large school roll. Smaller schools in rural areas that are most in need of financial assistance, receive much less and are not able to meet their full expenses. The quality of education in these smaller schools is therefore adversely affected.
- It is not a grant per se – so poor parents do not really benefit. They still have to meet the rising cost of equipping the child for school – that is pay for uniforms, bags, books etc.
- The regime had drastically reduced its Education Budget from 2008 onwards. In 2007, the budget allocation for Education was $312m but this was slashed to $239m in 2008 and remained low until 2013 when the allocation was increased to 268m. The Budget for 2014, the election year was increased by $100m to $370m. Clearly a vote-buying gesture and not a real commitment to improving education in the country.
✓ Labour will introduce value-based education as a core subject in schools to inculcate a healthy respect for democracy, human rights, good governance, the rule of law, gender equity and social and economic justice

✓ Labour will introduce a quota system to encourage students to enrol for studies in a variety of disciplines instead of going for the popular academic courses

✓ Invest more in school infrastructure development in both primary and secondary schools. The condition of the class rooms and furniture are appalling in a many schools, particularly those in rural areas.

✓ Require our universities to improve the quality of teacher training programmes. This will produce better high school graduates.

✓ Labour will ensure that every young person is guaranteed education or training until 18, with increased percentage going on to higher education or completing advanced apprenticeship or technician level training by the age of 25.

✓ Make available early childhood education in schools. Also, provide head start grants to existing kindergartens to raise standards and improve instruction in their early learning programs.
Housing for the Poor

Decent, affordable housing for all is a focal point of FLP’s social policy.

The availability of affordable housing for the poor is one of Fiji’s most critical social problems – as is evident through the mushrooming of squatter settlements in the outskirts of our major towns and cities.

Our urban population is increasing rapidly with an estimated 51% living in towns and cities today. More and more people are moving out of rural areas because of a depressed rural economy, in search of jobs and a better quality of life in urban areas. Some 47% of our rural people are reported to be living in poverty. But urban areas are unable to cope with this increased influx of people from the rural sector resulting in a mushrooming of squatter settlements. It is estimated that 20% of our people are currently living as squatters. Of this, 15,000 households, or close to 100,000 people, squat in the Suva Nausori-corridor alone.

The squatter problem is in itself a manifestation of escalating overall poverty which is currently placed at 45% of the total rural/urban population.

The main issues in relation to housing are basically:
- lack of accessibility to land and
- high land prices;
- high cost of building materials, making it unaffordable for low income families to own a house.

What has the regime done so far to address the problem?

The regime has failed to adequately address the squatter problem, despite being in office for 8 years. In fact, there has been a lot of rhetoric designed to fool the poor.

The Housing Authority (HA) took a $70 million loan from the Exim Bank of China to construct low cost housing for the low income earner. Half of this money, $35 million, has gone into the Tacirua East Housing project ostensibly to build houses for the poor. Similar projects are designed for Nadi, Ba, Tavua etc which are likely to face similar problems.

HA is now saying high development costs are making these lots unaffordable for the low income earner. At Tacirua, a 600 sq metre lot is priced at $40,000. Clearly out of the question for the ordinary income earner whose average wage is around $110 per week. Bigger lots between 913 sqm – 1264 sqm range in price from $80,000 -$110,000.

It is obvious from the large size and price tag of these lots that they were developed not for the poor but for the speculator. Many of these have been grabbed by the well off to be sold or developed later for a profit. Once again the poor have been hoodwinked by the regime.
What will FLP do to address the housing problem?

FLP believes there is a need for an integrated approach to housing for the poor. This will entail State assistance to enable them to own their own homes at affordable costs.

✔ We will set up a separate Ministry dedicated to Housing for the poor.

✔ We will direct the Housing Authority to dedicate its operations to developing special home ownership schemes for low income families.

✔ We will make houses available at a fixed price. It will be fixed at the level of affordability for low income families. Costs over and above the fixed price will be subsidized by the State.

✔ We will ensure that repayments to the Housing Authority for home loans will not exceed 25% of a family’s income.

✔ **Rural Housing/ Special Agricultural Estates – an integrated package**

This scheme will focus on development of the rural sector as a means of enhancing employment in rural areas and lifting living standards by setting up fully developed agricultural estates with housing and proper amenities, including schools, health centres etc.

The scheme will ease pressure from the urban sector by encouraging people to move back and settle in rural areas. Developed lots with houses and sufficient space for commercial agricultural activities will be allocated to families.

Each estate zone will engage in specialized commercial agriculture suitable for its terrain, soil and climate – such as the growing of tomatoes, pineapples, guava, other fruits, market garden produce as well as floriculture etc. The commodities grown will be for both the local and export markets.

State will assist with cultivation and marketing. Processing units will be set up which will assist with marketing of the produce and provide employment for the people of the estates. (More details on P6)
Labour’s Social Package

Most families today are the victims of:
• the ever-rising cost of living
• high unemployment
• increasing levels of poverty and
• lack of affordable housing

_In the last 8 years, poverty has risen from 35% to 45%, unemployment among youths is a shocking 20% and the cost of living has shot through the roof._

Labour will review the high electricity rates to provide relief to domestic as well as industrial and commercial users in light of the extremely high profits recorded by FEA since the revision of tariffs in 2010.

Labour will work with employers to increase the rate of contribution so that workers may retire on a decent pension

Labour will index FNPF pension to increases in the cost of living.
Labour's Social Package

**Old Age Pension**
- Labour will provide **$100 a month** to all elderly citizens over 65 who have no other source of income.

**Social Welfare Benefits**
- Between 2012 and 2013, over 400 recipients were removed from the Welfare Assistance scheme, subjecting them to intense hardship.
- Labour will restore their benefits and ensure that all disabled and elderly persons living in genuine hardship receive State assistance.
- Labour will periodically review rates of Welfare Assistance to provide relief from increased living costs.

**The Right to Work**
- Every able bodied man and woman should enjoy the right to work. The problems of poverty, housing and unemployment are inter-related and requires an integrated approach to address them. High unemployment is a reflection of a troubled economy. But our economy will not regain buoyancy without the restoration of democracy and respect for the rule of law.
- Labour will set up a National Service Scheme involving community service and the teaching of vocational skills for young people unable to find employment. Recruits will receive a living allowance.
- Labour will restore the retirement age to 60. Most people in this age group are experienced workers, able to contribute meaningfully to the national economy.
- High influx of foreign workers is taking jobs away from local people. Labour will closely monitor the situation to protect jobs for locals.
- Labour will establish a special fund to promote self-employment, including the setting up of small scale cottage industries in rural areas.

**Housing for Low Income Families**
Availability of affordable housing for the poor is one of Fiji’s most critical social problems. 20% of our people today live as squatters in overcrowded settlements lacking sanitation and proper amenities. A $70m Chinese loan project meant to provide low cost housing for the poor has failed as lots under the scheme are way too expensive for workers in the low income bracket. They are now being sold by Housing Authority to the well-off.

- Labour will redirect the operations of Housing Authority to developing affordable home ownership schemes for low income families.
- Labour will subsidise the cost of housing to the poor.
- Labour’s Agricultural Estates are designed to address the increasing squatter problem by encouraging people to move rural areas and take up farming on developed lots with subsidised housing.

Labour has consistently emphasised that our social problems need a holistic approach. Labour’s total package for social and economic reforms will promote general well-being and prosperity. But Labour recognises that in the long run, the solution to reducing poverty lies in empowering the poor – creating opportunities through a vibrant economy and ensuring a fair distribution of the nation’s wealth among its people.
Security, Law and Justice

The Judiciary

People’s confidence in the Judiciary has been severely shaken in the past six years following allegations and reports of interference and manipulation by the executive.

The authority of the Courts has been circumscribed to exclude from its jurisdiction any application or matter challenging any decision or action of the regime, its Ministers and officials retrospective to 5th December 2006.

Judges and even Magistrates are now appointed by the President on the advice of the Judicial Services Commission following consultation with the PM and the AG. The tenure of judges and magistrates, the Chief Justice included, are governed by short term employment contracts.

What Labour will do to restore confidence in the Judiciary

✓ Labour will set up an independent judicial Commission of Inquiry to be appointed by the President to investigate allegations of interference and manipulation of the judiciary. If the inquiry finds the allegations to be true, the cases affected will be brought back for review.

✓ To enhance the independence of the Courts, Justices of appellate courts, other than the Chief Justice and the President of the Fiji Court of Appeal, will be recruited from other compatible jurisdictions.

✓ A Code of Conduct will be considered for all holders of high public office including judicial officers based on the Bangalore Principles. Judges and Magistrates will be required to deliver their rulings within six months of the conclusion of a hearing.

✓ All decrees issued since April 2009 that undermine the independence and authority of the Courts will be repealed.

✓ Labour believes that the Legal Services Commission must be independent and autonomous institution, free of any external influence. To preserve the independence of the Courts, the Commission Chair must not be a judge of the High Court

✓ Labour will give more resources to the Courts to clear the huge backlog of cases and introduce timelines for cases to be concluded and rulings given to ensure speedy carriage of justice

✓ Special courts will be created for traffic offences and petty crime to free up the court system to deal swiftly with the more serious cases

Fighting Corruption

Despite the establishment of FICAC, corruption both in the public and private sector remains entrenched. FICAC has simply become a machinery of the regime to harass and prosecute anti-regime elements. It has turned a blind eye to reports and allegations of corruption against cronies of the regime.

✓ Labour will see the appointment of a truly independent commission with powers to inquire into allegations of corruption and to prosecute offenders, both in the private and public sectors.

✓ Labour will enact Code of Conduct and Freedom of Information legislation as a matter of priority to provide open access to government information
The Police Force

The Police Force has primary responsibility for the maintenance of law and order and the security of all our citizens and their property. However, in recent years much has gone wrong with the administration of the Force. Morale is low and this is hardly surprising considering the constant interference with its operations by the regime.

The militarization and politicization of the Police Force since the 1987 coups has seriously compromised its independence and professional competence. Appointments and promotions to senior ranks have been based on considerations other than merit, sidelining competent and dedicated career officers. Military officers were brought in as Police Commissioners to ensure that the Force remained loyal to the Army Command.

Labour wants to restore the professionalism and independence of the Police Force so that it may once again regain its credibility with our citizens. Labour will:

- review upwards the salaries and allowances of police officers to reflect the actual worth of their services to the nation
- provide for transparency and accountability in the appointment, promotion, training, transfer and disciplinary processes of the Force. At present all this is at the sole discretion of the Commissioner of Police.
- establish a Police Integrity Commission to investigate and prosecute complaints against the police.
- fully equip the Force with the requisite equipment and professional and technical skills to effectively combat all kinds of crime
- ensure that all ethnic communities are fairly represented at all levels in the composition of the Force
- pursue a vigorous policy of community policing schemes in crime prone areas to reduce crime rates

The Fiji Military Forces

While holding a proud record for peace-keeping duties abroad, the RFMF has regrettably become a destabilizing force at home. The coups of 1987 and 2000 were executed and/or supported by the military against Labour-led governments which they portrayed as a threat to the long term well-being and security of the indigenous community.

But the 2006 coup which removed an indigenous Fijian government from office, established that the Army leadership has other designs. It is now obvious that the military’s strategy is to legitimize its unlawful and unconstitutional rule through an electoral process which is seriously flawed.

To avoid future extra constitutional actions by the Army to takeover government, Labour believes that the armed forces must remain under the control of the government exercised through the Cabinet and the Minister responsible.

The circumstances under which the military forces may be deployed either in Fiji or abroad must receive the approval of Parliament.

Military expenditure is substantially more than that of the Agriculture Ministry and higher than that for the Police Force.

Last year, for instance, (2013) it was allocated $107 million against $92m for the Police Force and $52m for Agriculture.

Fiji is a peaceful nation with no real external or internal threat to its security. The proportion of national budget spent on the military needs to be rationalized.

Labour will ensure opportunities are made available to younger, well qualified and proficient officers to take up command positions within the RFMF.Labour wishes to see the RFMF transform itself into a well drilled, disciplined professional institution, dedicated to respecting and upholding the rule of law, and preserving and protecting a democratically promulgated Constitution.
Empowering our Youth

Youth issues have always been at the forefront of Labour’s policies since its founding 29 years ago. We have repeatedly called for the voting age to be reduced to 18 years to ensure youth participation in nation building – in our submissions to the Constitutional Review Commission in 1996, and again in 2012.

Major challenges facing our Youths are:

- unemployment – youth unemployment is reportedly at 20%
- high rate of crime among our youth
- lack of vocational education and training
- financial constraints posed by increasing levels of poverty and high cost of education

To address problems of unemployment, Labour will pursue strong economic growth as it believes this to be essential for job creation. Every year, it is estimated that close to 20,000 young people join the workforce but many remain unable to find employment or get a job of their choice.

Towards this end, Labour believes that it has the competence, the vision, and the determination to re-create a robust Fijian economy that will benefit all. We achieved this in 1999/2000 – we turned the economy around from negative performance two years running, to a record of 9.6% growth.

Community Service

✓ Labour will pursue a National Service Scheme for unemployed youths to engage them in community work. Not only will this provide temporary jobs for our young people, it will help to inculcate in them a spirit of discipline and service to the country. Those enlisted will receive vocational training and get nominal pays until they find regular employment.

Relevant education

✓ Labour will review Education policies and the curriculum to reflect national needs and aspirations.
✓ Labour will encourage and extend vocational training to ensure that it meets the national requirement for skills and trade expertise;
✓ Labour will introduce a quota system to encourage our youth to enroll for studies in a variety of disciplines instead of just going for the popular academic courses.

Finance for Education

This a major issue as the cost of education has escalated particularly at the tertiary level. Ever sensitive to the needs of our people, in 1999 the Labour-led government took steps in 1999 to assist needy children:

✓ Labour initiated the first Student Loan Scheme to assist poorer students access tertiary education
✓ Labour government also extended fee-free education to the 7th Form students.

Labour is aware that the cost of tertiary education has sky-rocketed in recent years. This places an immense burden on parents wanting to give their children higher education.
Labour will review the Student Loan Scheme in light of rising costs of education to ensure that the allocation is sufficient to meet demand. For those students who successfully complete their course of study, Labour will reduce the loan repayment to 50% of the borrowed sum.

Labour will introduce a fee-subsidy for students undertaking tertiary studies.

Labour will explore the possibility of our large well-equipped secondary schools to be accredited to recognised universities, both local and abroad, as colleges to bring down the high cost of university education.

**Empowering our Youth**

Labour will set up a special fund to encourage and assist self-employment among youth by providing financial assistance to start off their business ventures. It is often difficult for young people to get bank loans because of their inability to provide security.

**Identifying the creative abilities of our Youth**

Labour will identify and encourage youths with special talents – be it in the field of music, painting, art and crafts, dancing or other creative abilities or prowess in athletics or sports. Fiji has a lot of untapped talent. An academy of fine arts and sports will be established to promote and develop these special skills. This is part of Labour’s vision to preserve our rich cultural heritage.

**Youth in decision making**

Labour will establish Youth Councils at major centers geared to serving the needs and aspirations of our Youth. The Councils will articulate problems of youth and take up youth-related issues with the government. Through the Youth Councils, young people will have a say in decision making at both the national and local level.

In upholding Fiji’s commitment to CEDAW, Labour will pursue equal female representation on Youth Councils as a national policy.
FLP supports and will enhance Women’s Rights

Fiji Labour Party fully supports the voice of women in Fiji for social justice, gender equality, democracy and respect for human rights.

At 50% of the total national population, women must receive due recognition in their aspirations for economic and political empowerment. Yet, a significant number of women remain largely impoverished. As workers they are subjected to low pays, gender inequality and sexual exploitation. At home they are subjected to domestic violence. They tend to be the major victims of any instability in society.

Areas of particular concern to the FLP are:

- increased cases of reported violence against women and children which have taken on new dimensions with the emergence of human trafficking and the rise in rape and child abuse.
- in factories, shops and offices and as domestic workers, women employees are generally paid below poverty line wages
- feminisation of poverty has become a critical issue as women now make up the highest number of those living in poverty, without access to basic services
- the negligible number of women in leadership positions in government departments and in the private sector
- Gender disparity in parliament where there is a critically low representation of women, despite the good number of highly qualified women professionals, business women and NGO leaders in Fiji.

FLP is concerned that despite their vulnerability, the regime’s Constitution is glaringly silent on Women. The trashed Ghai draft constitution had given due recognition to the role of women in society even to the point of allocating reserved seats for them in Parliament.

Fiji is among those Pacific Island countries that have admitted that they would have difficulty achieving the required Millenium Development Goal (MDG) Targets on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women by 2015.

FLP is committed to initiating policies to address these areas of concern. One of these will be to set targets to ensure there is a significant and sustained increase of women in national leadership positions in parliament and at local government level, over a set period of time.

FLP will adopt Temporary Special Measures as a policy to encourage more women to come forward to take up leadership positions. FLP believes that women can no longer afford to be bystanders and victims of many dimensions of human insecurity – financial, political, health, personal - generated by the current state of political and governance environment.
State institutions and the Civil Service

In the past 7 years, the regime has systemically militarized and politicized the civil service. Professional civil servants have been replaced by Army officers as Permanent Secretaries, heads of departments, statutory board members and directors. Cultural nepotism is reportedly quite pervasive. Many of those appointed to senior positions do not possess the minimum qualification requirements for the posts.

The situation has been made even worse with the imposition of the regime’s 2013 Constitution which now requires the agreement of the Minister on such matters as appointments, promotions, discipline and dismissal of all staff. This extends even further to requiring Minister’s approval for determining employment conditions, qualification requirements for appointments, and the process to be followed for appointments etc.

The role of the Public Service Commission has been reduced to just appointing, removing or taking disciplinary action against Permanent Secretaries, again with the approval of the Prime Minister.

The well established convention requiring complete independence from political influence in the appointment of persons to independent constitutional offices has been completely wiped out under the 2013 Constitution. The Constitutional Offices Commission (COC) which is responsible for advising the President on such appointments, is to be chaired by the Prime Minister, with three other government nominees as members. Only two of the six-member Commission will be from the Opposition.

Civil servants have lost their trade union rights under the State Services Decree. Their terms and conditions of employment have been changed to their detriment by the State. This has happened by revoking their permanent employment status to short-term individual employment contracts thereby removing altogether their security of employment, as well as many of the employment benefits negotiated by their unions over the years.

Appointments and promotions are now decided by Permanent Secretaries, without any right of appeal. There is little transparency in the process. Consequently, many deserving candidates are overlooked while the handpicked obtain promotions. The retirement age for civil servants was reduced to 55. As a result, some 2500 of them had their working lives shortened by 5 years with consequential loss of income. This harsh measure placed many of them in great financial difficulty as they struggled to meet their outstanding financial commitments.

Labour will restore rights of Civil Service workers

✓ Labour will reverse all these negative developments. A Labour government will restore permanency of employment and appeal rights on promotions, disciplinary penalties and transfers. Retirement age will be moved back to 60.

✓ Labour will fully restore the trade union rights of public sector unions.

✓ Labour will commission a pay review exercise to correct anomalies in the pay structure of civil servants arising from the outlandish increases awarded to permanent secretaries.

✓ Labour will, over time, restore overall racial parity in the composition of the public service, a requirement of the 1970, 1990 and 1997 Constitutions which had been largely ignored since the 1987 coups

✓ Labour will reshape the civil service culture to mould it into a cohesive, result-oriented performance-based institution. Priority will be given to expertise and capacity building of locals to reduce dependence on expatriates.

✓ Labour will consider appropriate payment for those made redundant without compensation, under the regime’s reform programmes
A restricted Media

The Fiji media has been one of the major casualties of the regime’s denial of human rights since 2009. Six years of a culture of repression and censorship has taken a heavy toll of acknowledged media freedoms and its ethics of honest, fair and balanced dissemination of news and opinions.

Following the abrogation of the 1997 Constitution in April 2009 and imposition of the Public Emergency Regulations (PER), the regime imposed severe censorship on the media. Political activity was banned and no political statements, comments or opinions critical of the regime and its policies could be published under broad guidelines such as being “against the national interest” or undermining the government and the State of Fiji.

The Media Decree imposed heavy penalties of up to $100,000, prison terms and personal liability for media personnel to ensure the media toed the line. A couple of prosecutions against certain media organisations and hefty fines were sufficient to intimidate the media and repress fair and balanced coverage.

Against this media backdrop of fear and intimidation, the nation is forced to hold general elections. Although there has been some relaxing in terms of coverage of political activities and policies, the media is still generally reluctant to publish any statement, even of fact, that is critical of the regime’s electoral policies. This means that accurate information on how the September polls are being conducted, the withdrawal of past practices that would ensure free and fair elections, is not getting through to the people.

Such a culture of repression has retarded and undermined the development of proper journalistic skills among the new breed of journalists.

Recognising the essential role of the media in a democratic society, Labour will:

✓ Restore media freedom.

✓ Review the Media Industry Development Decree to remove the harsh penalties and restrictions on media freedom.

✓ Remove media licensing restrictions and review local/expatriate ownership laws in the best interests of the nation

✓ Promote intensive journalism training programmes to offset the debilitating impact of seven years of censorship on standards of reporting and media ethics.

✓ Labour believes that with freedom must come responsibility. In a plural society, in particular, the media has to be sensitive to the rights of individuals, ethnic and minority groups. There must be a body to deal with abuse of media freedom.

✓ For speedy administration of justice to aggrieved persons, FLP advocates a Media Tribunal, separate from the Court system, to deal with complaints arising from abuse of media freedom, with powers to award damages.
Protecting our Environment

Fiji’s natural tropical environment with heavily forested mountainous interior and beautiful coastline and beaches is one of the country’s major assets. However, it is coming increasingly under attack from indiscriminate human development and abuse as well as climate change.

It is tragic to see our beautiful country losing its environmental assets through neglect, and lack of conservation policies and oversight. Mining leases issued in the past six years, have ignored the impact on the environment much to the concern of landowners eg Namosi copper mines. Bauxite mining in Bua has allowed the import of raw ore, to the detriment of the environment.

Our mangroves reserves are fast giving way to haphazard low quality coastal development projects. This has led to depletion of coral and marine life, severe flooding of towns and farm areas as major rivers overflow their banks and, heavy flooding in town areas caused by blocked and inadequate drainage. These floods have worsened in recent years, causing millions of dollars in damage to property.

Many of our smaller rivers and creeks are drying up and disappearing due to heavy silting and lack of maintenance. Environmental mismanagement and neglect are also resulting in serious disease outbreaks and epidemics such as dengue, typhoid etc.

Climate change poses its own problems. It is forecast that as a result of the warming of oceans, cyclones and hurricanes will be more frequent and more intense. At the same time the frequency and intensity of rainfall could change, droughts could become a major problem. In Fiji there is threat to coastal areas and coastal villages. It is estimated that Beachcomber and Treasure Islands face long term threat from rising sea levels. Gau has already lost 200 meters of its coastline. There is danger of saline intrusion into sources of fresh water.

What Labour will do:

✓ We will ensure strict compliance with the litter laws to keep our environment clean at all times
✓ Labour will commission enquiries into all major areas subjected to heavy flooding in recent years to determine the cause, and take action to address the problems. Often these are a result of failure to carry out proper environmental impact studies before approving major developmental projects.
✓ Labour will ensure rivers and major waterways are kept dredged and cleaned so as to minimize flooding; We will fund stormwater management programmes to prevent pollution and flooding during heavy rains
✓ Labour will monitor the exploitation of marine resources to ensure long term sustainability
✓ Labour will promulgate regulations, and ensure strict adherence, to limit pollution from gas emissions as well as industries, including requiring major tourism developments to have effective sewerage treatment facilities. We will monitor the impact of fertilisers and other pollutants on our precious coral reefs.
✓ Labour will give priority to the conservation of Fiji’s biodiversity, much of which is unique to Fiji. We will provide the necessary resources to implement the National Diversity Strategy and Action Plan.
✓ Labour will ensure proper and regular maintenance of drains, parks and roadside verges to prevent disease epidemics

Climate Change:

✓ Labour will enforce better protection and conservation of our mangrove resources – as a means of preventing coastal erosion, as a source of marine food as well as timberLabour will study the impact of receding coastlines on coastal villages and settlements and find alternative sites to relocate them when necessary
Sports/ Arts/ Culture and Heritage

Fiji has a rich and diverse cultural heritage including a unique indigenous culture, traditions and value systems which must be preserved. Our cultural heritage is expressed in forms of art and crafts, music, dance, different religious practices and architectural forms.

Unfortunately, this is a neglected area. The regime has done virtually nothing to preserve and promote our cultural heritage. In fact, it has deliberately engaged in dismantling cultural traditions. The Labour Government in 1999 had established a separate Department of Culture and Heritage to be responsible for the promotion and preservation of our arts and heritage.

Quite apart from its aesthetic and emotional appeal, art, music and culture carry enormous potential for job creation and income generation.

What more will Labour do:

- We will promote and support opportunities for cultural expression and experience. A fund will be set aside for this purpose. The private sector and other groups will be asked to assist.
- Fiji’s rich talent of painters, musicians, vocal artists and entertainers will receive State support to encouragement and opportunity to develop their skills
- Labour will provide the support necessary to restore the Dance Theatre of Fiji to its original status and to be widely used for overseas promotions as under the government of Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara
- Fiji’s heritage sites in Suva, Levuka, Vuda and other historical places will be restored and preserved – they will provide an added dimension to our tourism industry
- The development of traditional art and crafts will help generate incomes for people in the outer islands It will preserve and develop the unique art of each province
- Arts and culture should form a lively part of Fiji’s life. Labour will encourage and sponsor an annual Arts Alive International Festival as a cultural celebration
Agricultural Land

In an agricultural country such as Fiji, land is a vital resource. However, Labour recognizes and respects its strong cultural relevance for the indigenous community.

A lasting solution to the land problem, therefore, can only be reached through dialogue and consensus with the representatives of the landowning community.

The regime’s dictatorial policies on land is counter productive in the long run. It only serves to create more friction and resentment among the races. Through its authoritarian measures, it has created a situation where neither the landowner nor the tenant is satisfied.

Another concern is the manner in which land is being alienated to foreigners without proper procedures being followed.

The regime has imposed unilateral decisions on land issues which have interfered with the land owning rights of the indigenous community; at the same time it has undermined the security of the tenant community.

The regime’s 2013 Constitution removes entrenched protection provided to land matters (Native Lands Trust Act and The Landlord and Tenant Act) in the 1970, the 1990 and 1997 constitutions. This was done unilaterally without any consultation with the affected parties.

State (Crown Land)

The regime has substantially increased the rental on State land and has back-dated it several years requiring tenants to pay thousands of dollars as arrears owed in respect of previous years when, in fact, they did not have renewed leases in their hand.

Labour will:

- Review the constitution to restore the privileged status given to land thus entrenching both NLTA and ALTA to secure both landowners and tenant rights and interests
- Recognise the right of TLTB to issue leases and make decisions regarding the protection, development and management of native leases
- Negotiate 50 year leases for agricultural land at a rental of 10% of the UCV (up from the current 6% of UCV); State to meet 50% of the rental to promote agriculture and provide a better return to the landowners.
- Labour will waive the back-dated arrears and review all rentals on a case by case basis to ensure that farmers are treated fairly.

Local Government

Labour will restore elected municipal councils but will reform the system to ensure ratepayers get value for their money. The current system of State appointed administrators is fraught with inefficiencies, corruption and laxity in enforcing by-laws, and in promoting the interests of ratepayers. Huge sums of money are being spent on luxury projects while basic services to ratepayers are being cut back on with no accountability from those holding office.
TOURISM

Given Fiji’s natural assets of sun, surf and waving palms, its friendly people and largely unspoilt tropical environment, Tourism has a vast potential as a billion-dollar industry. Its main promise lies in the fact that it is closely identified with the indigenous population and carries the potential to create jobs and investment opportunities for nearby villages and vastly improve their quality of life.

Unfortunately, much of this promise lies untapped. It is an undeniable fact that major growth in tourism took place in the 1980s under the Alliance Government of Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara. The regime has failed to push development in tourism as a means of creating jobs and tapping its income potential for the indigenous community. The growth we have witnessed recently is through the industry’s own impetus rather than government policy and direction.

What Labour will do to further develop Tourism:

✓ Labour will encourage and assist the development of major resorts and tourism related businesses
✓ Labour will opt for an open skies policy to provide greater competition and fare reduction
✓ Labour will plug the high leakage of industry income through various measures, including greater use of local food products
✓ Labour will spread the benefits of tourism to other parts of Fiji, through better concessional initiatives.
✓ Labour will commission a special study on the development of the historical island of Ovalau and Taveuni as tourist destinations. We will explore government/private sector initiatives to restore and preserve the unique colonial heritage of Levuka
✓ To promote greater involvement of Fijian villages in Tourism, and encourage development of eco tourism projects on land owned by them through a special fund. This will encourage income generating activities in village art and crafts and cultural entertainment groups
✓ Labour will encourage investment in National Parks

Tropical Fiji has a vast array of colourful flora and fauna, many of them unique to our islands (some of which are threatened species). These will be nurtured and cultivated as part of Labour’s plan to develop nature parks and gardens (refer also to section on Environment) which will attract tourists and provide recreational facilities for our people.

✓ Labour will revive the Cultural Theatre of Fiji and encourage the formation of other groups that can perform regularly at hotels and resorts
✓ Labour will promote Health tourism. Fiji’s largely unspoilt, unpolluted environment and natural beauty provide enormous potential for the establishment of Health Spas and Farms to attract the affluent and those needing to get away from the tensions and stresses of modern cities
Foreign Policy

Fiji's foreign policy must be guided by what is in its best interest. As a sovereign nation, Fiji must exercise its right to pursue an independent foreign policy.

We will take steps to redeem our lost reputation in the region, and the international community, on account of the events of the past 7-8 years.

We will ensure Fiji’s commercial interests are promoted with vigour through its diplomatic missions, and strengthen our relations with international and regional organisations.

We will concentrate our resources in securing maximum development assistance and continued market accessibility for our major exports.

We will continue our friendly relations with our neighbouring island states and with Australia and New Zealand. We value also our relations with all nations and organisations which provide us technical assistance and trade opportunities.

At the same time, Fiji will actively pursue alliances with other vulnerable economies around the world to combat the adverse impact of globalisation and trade liberalisation policies on our economies.

Human Rights Commission

Labour will fully restore the independence and mandate of the Human Rights Commission which was watered down by the regime. It has been reduced to virtually an instrument of the State.

Secular State

Fiji must remain a secular State that observes the fundamental freedoms and rights of its citizens, in particular the guarantee of full religious freedom.

Citizenship rights

Citizenship rights of a nation should not be held cheaply and sold to foreigners for financial gain or otherwise. Labour will review the current laws to ensure that citizenship is only granted to those who genuinely deserve it.

Compensation for Victims of Coups

Loyal, innocent soldiers and policemen have died in the course of duty defending their State. Hundreds of others, victims of orchestrated acts of terrorism, lost their property when houses were torched or suffered personal injury through torture and violence both in the 1987 and 2000 coups, and following the Army takeover in December 2006. The State must compensate all those who suffered. Labour will make due provision for this following a study of similar measures implemented elsewhere.
NOTES
Mission Statement
Together we will make Fiji a country and a society that will:

• Assure everyone of their future security and rights as people of one nation.
• Remove all vestiges of discrimination based on race, religion, colour or creed.
• Create new prosperity through prudent and sustainable use of Fiji’s human and natural resources.
• Give young people hope for the future through increased employment opportunities.
• Provide a decent standard of living for all our people.
• Actively promote measures aimed at gender equality.
• Ensure the provision of adequate health, education and welfare services.
• Protect the disadvantaged and the needy.

Founding Principles of the Fiji Labour Party

• Recognition and protection of fundamental political and civil rights, including free and democratic elections, freedom of expression, freedom of the individual and a just legal system.
• Elimination of discrimination and exploitation on the grounds of class, race, sex, religion, political affiliation and age.
• Abolition of poverty and the achievement of an equitable distribution of income, wealth and opportunities.
• Fostering of a national identity for our people.
• Proper management of Fiji’s resources, and protection of the environment.
• Redistribution of political and economic power so that all members of society have the opportunity to participate in institutions and the processes which determine their lives.
• Promotion of the democratic socialisation of industry, production, distribution and exchange in order to eliminate anti-social exploitative practices.
• Maintenance and creation of and support for a competitive non-monopolistic private sector with particular emphasis on small-scale business, farming and co-operatives, controlled and owned by the people of Fiji, and operating within clear social guidelines and objectives.
• Recognition and encouragement of the right of labour to organise for the protection and advancement of its objectives.
• Application of industrial democracy to increase opportunities for people to work in satisfying, healthy and humane conditions and to participate in and increase their control over, the decision making processes affecting them.
• Provision and maintenance of full and meaningful employment.
Our beautiful Fiji: Let us together reclaim it for our people