



FIJI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

FNUNIKUA



OPEN DAY 2018

ISSUE NO. 06

JULY 2018

University eyes ambitious development plans



Secondary School students with FNU Vice Chancellor, Professor Nigel Healey.

The Fiji National University (FNU) is planning to make huge strides in the development of its physical infrastructure across its main campuses to improve the educational experience of all its students, following the increase in allocation by the Fijian Government as announced in the 2018/19 National Budget.

FNU Vice Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey said the National Budget contained a wide range of announcements and initiatives that directly or indirectly positively impact the University.

“In terms of direct grants to the University, our operating grant – which is, in effect, a tuition subsidy to allow us to offer academic programmes at tuition fees which are below cost – has increased from \$56.1m to \$65.1m,” said VC Healey.

“To the extent that our 2017/18 operating grant included a one-off payment of \$2.7m to fund the cost of connecting to Australian Academic and Research Network (AARNet), the underlying increase in core funding is 22% – up from \$53.4m to \$65.1m. This comes on top of a similar increase in core funding from \$45.1m to \$53.4m in 2017/18.”

VC Healey said the additional funding ensures that services to its clients meet their expectations.

“The University had submitted a very carefully constructed budget request, with additional funding requested for 2018/19 to contribute to the cost of the new University Management Information System (UMIS) – which will cost a total of approximately \$20m over the next five years in terms of software, hardware and staff costs – and to fund another stepwise increase in repairs and maintenance spending from \$10m in 2018 to \$13m in 2019,” said Professor Healey.

Capital projects

In addition to the \$11.7m increase to the Government operating grant, FNU received a further \$19m for 2018/19 (up from \$14m in 2017/18) to fund its ongoing capital programme.

As in 2017/18, Fiji National University is the only higher education institution to receive a capital grant in the 2018/19 budget.

The capital grants for 2018/19 are:

- Labasa Campus: \$6m
- CBHTS 4-storey building: \$4m
- CAFF animal hospital and laboratories: \$4m
- FMA new building and upgrades: \$5m

“This year we are spending a total of \$51m in new buildings, inclusive of the Government grant, and we will need to rework our spending programme in the light of the new capital grant to ensure our major projects – the Labasa Campus, the CBHTS 4-storey building, the CAFF animal hospital and laboratories, the gymnasium and the creative arts building – remain firmly on track,” said VC Healey.

High-speed internet

There’s further good news for current and future students as under the ‘digitalFIJI’ initiative led by Walesi, which recently launched the free-to-air digital boxes and

the Walesi mobile app (which allows digital TV to be viewed on a smart phone), the Government is funding Walesi to work with Fiji National University to install high-speed wifi across all campuses and centres.

“We have already provided Walesi with the details of the hardware and software required and work on this exciting initiative will begin immediately. This comes hot on the heels of the Australian Academic and Research Network (AARNet) connection immediately before Easter, so our digital connectivity on campus will have been transformed to world-leading in just a few short months,” Professor Healey said.

The high-speed wifi project with Walesi has commenced and projections indicate that FNU Campuses will come on-line in stages starting August.

New programmes

Professor Healey said the University was also working with its senior academics to see how the new programmes covered under the Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Board (TSLB) and National Toppers Scheme (NTS) can be offered by the University.

The new areas include: medical imaging science, climate change, real estate and property valuation, human resource management and industrial relations, speech therapy, educational and clinical psychology, occupational therapy and nutrition and sports science.

50 new TSLB awards will be available for in-service teachers to upgrade their qualifications to bachelor’s level (30 awards) or postgraduate level (20 awards, including for PhD study).

These awards are focused on teachers of English language and literature, mathematics and physics and (for bachelor’s degrees only) ICT, special education and early childhood education – all areas in which FNU has distinctive strengths.

In addition, there will be a new Postgraduate Scholarship Scheme, which will offer 50 awards each year – 40 awards for master’s degrees and 10 awards for PhD studies.

“In our budget consultations with the Ministry of Economy, Government officials noted that as the undergraduate market becomes increasingly saturated, the main growth will be at postgraduate level and the Government is keen to support the development of advanced education. As a University, we will need to ensure that we are prepared to meet the growing demand for postgraduate education,” said Professor Healey.

Lateral entry MBBS programme

Following consultations with the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Government has agreed that graduates entering FNU’s lateral entry Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) programme will be eligible for TELS funding.

The lateral entry MBBS is a graduate entry route into the Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery programme. It allows graduates from other medical science degrees to take a one-year conversion programme and then join Year 4 with the other MBBS students.

Until now graduates who had already been funded by TSLB for a bachelor’s degree were ineligible for further TELS funding. This restriction has now been removed and up to 30 TELS-funded places will be available in the lateral entry MBBS.

Select the right study programme

– VC Healey

Choosing what and where to study at University is one of the most important decisions students make in their life.

This decision will change the direction a student's life takes and sets them on a new course. Whichever programme students choose – whether it is in teacher training, medicine, engineering or agriculture – it will open up a different set of choices and opportunities in the years ahead.

The Fiji National University (FNU) held its Open Day at three locations around the country namely Nasinu Campus (Central Division), Natabua Campus, Lautoka (Western Division) and Labasa Civic Centre (Northern Division).

The event was the biggest so far with more 10,000 students, parents, teachers and members of the public attended the event. Students from 104 secondary schools attended the two-day event at the three locations.

Speaking to secondary school students at Nasinu Campus during the 2018 Open Day, FNU Vice Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey said such engagements are important as it enabled prospective students and guardians to talk to staff and students, and find out more about what each programme entails and the job prospects when students graduate.

“Think of the Open Day as the academic equivalent of an international car show. All our Colleges and all our programmes are on show here. For example, you might have a general interest in engineering. Talk to our engineers and find out more about the

‘flavours’ of engineering that are available to study – mechanical engineering, civil engineering, electrical engineering,” said VC Healey.

FNU, being a vocational university prepares students for real jobs. All FNU programmes are co-designed with employers to equip students to be ‘day one, work-ready’.

Furthermore all FNU programmes require students to undertake workplace attachments to prepare them to join the labour force.

“We judge our performance by the percentage of our graduates who get a job after they have completed their diplomas and degrees. Our graduate surveys each April show that between 80-90% of students completing their studies in the previous December are employed – a figure that compares very favourably with universities in Australia and New Zealand,” said



FNU Vice Chancellor, Professor Nigel Healey speaking to Baulevu High School students during the Open Day.

Professor Healey.

Fiji National University, being a dual sector university, offers programmes at certificate and diploma level in practical subjects such as carpentry, plumbing, automotive engineering, aircraft maintenance, cookery and restaurant services, as well as bachelor's degrees in a wide range of subjects from medicine and nursing to engineering and accounting.

“Many of the labour shortages in Fiji are in trades like plumbing, carpentry and electricians. The construction industry is booming. These are also the trades where, once you have some work experience, there are great opportunities to set up your own businesses and be your own boss. All these programmes are offered at the Fiji National University,” Professor Healey said.

As Fiji's national university, FNU has a nationwide footprint of 10 major campuses in the Central, Western

and Northern Divisions.

The University is investing heavily in technology, to reach ever more students with blended learning programmes to help people study in their own communities.

“We recently connected the University directly to the Southern Cross submarine cable, which means our broadband speeds are now superfast. We are currently working with Walese to ensure that all our campuses and teaching centres have comprehensive wifi access, wherever you are on campus,” said VC Healey.

University is a time when students become independent adults, when they find out who they are and what they want to do with their lives.

So whichever subject students eventually choose, the university years will be some of the happiest and most transformative in students' lives.



Levuka Public School students attend Open Day



Levuka Public School students during Open Day at FNU Nasinu Campus.

It was an early morning start for eighty-five students from Levuka Public School as they journeyed to the Fiji National University (FNU) Nasinu Campus to be part of the Open Day.

The students woke up at 2am, got dressed and were on the road by 3am to catch the morning ferry from Levuka to Natovi before a bus ride to Nasinu.

But despite the hectic morning travel all the students were in high spirits and thoroughly enjoyed their tour of the campus.

Year 12 friends, Marama Bati and Savaira Wati, said they were excited to get a first-hand experience of their potential University environment.

Bati was thrilled to find out the wide range of programmes offered by FNU through its campuses and centres located around Fiji.

“The journey to Suva from Levuka was tiring but it faded away as soon as I set foot on Campus. Getting to sit in the lecture theatre for the meet and greet session was an awesome experience,” said Bati.

“We were advised by our teachers to look at other options that FNU offers and not just focus on the programmes of our interest and I must admit that coming here has really given us that experience and chance.”

“I was in awe while visiting the College of Humanities and Education (CHE) booth, particularly, finding out the fact that I can enrol in some programmes after completing

form six.”

She said her interest has always been in the field of arts and CHE provided the perfect programme choices for her.

“The programmes that have really gotten my attention are Hair Dressing, Graphics Designs, Music and other arts courses offered through CHE. I had never thought of these professions to be such exciting and creative until I saw it with my own eyes today and now I am seriously considering one of these as my career path,” Bati added.

Wati, on the other hand, was impressed with the facilities and the welcoming nature of the staff and students of the University.

With staff and students attending to the queries of the students in a very detailed manner, Wati said, she was able to learn about the programme requirements that would assist her in making a wise choice for the future.

“The way the programmes are offered here (FNU) is interesting. I have come to know that I can start with Certificate Level and climb up the qualification-ladder. Since there are provisions given by FNU to choose from certain programmes after completing Year 12, I might skip Year 13 next year and start with tertiary studies. I will go back and speak to my family about starting with Certificate programme next year,” said Wati.

“I am very thankful to the students and staff of FNU for answering our questions in detail which really helped us to understand what we have to do to enrol at FNU. I believe their attitude towards us boosted our confidence to ask more questions and clear all our doubts,” Wati added.

Student Highlights



Name: Kaushik Karan
Year 12

School: Mahatma Gandhi Memorial high School

“All the displays were really cool and showcased the creativeness of FNU. My particular interest was Engineering as I am planning to study Civil Engineering. It was really great to meet the Engineering students explaining to us their projects and models. The practical work done by these students seems to be so intense and this is why I am looking forward to joining FNU’s Engineering programme.”



Name: Vasemaca Waqanisau
Year 12

School: Rampur College

“My day has been very informative and entertaining. I have been able to learn about so many career choices just in over 3 hours and now I can say my interest lies in Office Technology and it is great to know that FNU offers courses in many different aspects of this profession.”



Name: Seini M Koroi
Year 12

School: Gospel High School

“Open Day was very educational and there were a lot of interesting projects showcased. I got to see a 3D Printer which was cool and the creative Arts booth was mind blowing. I also learnt more about Biology and how DNA strand can be replicated and how to stuff a pigeon. From Arts to Science, everything was just amazing.”



It was a great learning experience for Fiji National University (FNU) students who volunteered to be tour guides during the Open Day.

Sharing their experience, the volunteers said it was a tough but rewarding experience.

Isiei Baleira who is a second year Bachelor of Education (Secondary) student said it was the first time for him to see what the College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF) had to offer.

“I came to know about the Animal Husbandry programmes for the first time on Thursday,” he said.

Baleira said most of the students he took around on tour were interested in CAFF programmes and they spent a significant amount of time there due to the interesting displays.

“The staff and students from the college put up an impressive display and this captivated the students,” he said.

Salaseini Kavunono, a student at the College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST) said being a tour guide for two days was tiring but fun.

“I made sure that the students who were with me had fun. All you need to do with high school students is connect with them. Once you connect with them, it becomes fun,” she said.

“When I came to the FNU Open Day as a student, our tour guide didn’t express himself well so I made sure that I talked to the students and made it lively and exciting for them,” she added.

Kavunono said she appreciated being with students from the interior schools because they listened to what was being communicated to them.

“Some students spent more time than allocated at a few booths because they had lot of questions. I let them spend more time because it’s their future they deciding.”

Akhilesh Sharan, Bachelor of Commerce student at Nasinu Campus said he learnt a few things from students, teachers and his fellow tour guides.

Sharan said he decided to volunteer as a tour guide as it provided him an opportunity to meet and interact with students and make new friends.

“When we are studying, we just meet our lecturers and classmates but this was an opportunity to meet and interact with other people. It was a very interesting experience and I really enjoyed it,” he said.

“There are some students who never go out of the classroom. By taking part in these kinds of activities we learn to be vocal and become confident to face the crowd. These skills will be needed in the future when I join the workforce,” he added.

Another tour guide, Debbie Komai said she mostly took science students around and they were interested in the programmes offered at the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS).

“I had fun taking students around. It was also a good learning experience for me,” she said.

Komai said she would encourage her friends to volunteer next year so that they build on their self-confidence.

Student volunteers gain valuable experience



FNU Open Day student volunteers; Salaseini Kavunono, Isiei Baleira and Debbie Komai.

Students eager to learn about FNU programmes

Prospective students armed with a list of questions visited the FNU Open Day to obtain first-hand information regarding study programmes on offer and the minimum entry requirements for programmes they were interested in pursuing.

Tarusila Delai, a Year 12 student from Rampur College said she came to the FNU Open Day to find out more about courses related to Forestry which is being offered by the College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF).

“I got interested in Forestry when my uncle joined Department of Forestry. He used to tell us about his work in conserving our rich environment,” she said.

Delai said she was also passionate about sustainable development and protection of our marine environment.

“I want to educate people on the importance of planting trees and protecting our mangroves.”

“We see lot of trees being cut down and very few are planted,” she added.

Delai was excited to see the creative display by (CAFF).

The CAFF students put-up interactive displays at the Nasinu Campus grounds and were fully engaged with answering questions from prospective students and parents.

Another student Losevati Liku from Dawasamu Secondary School said she was not sure what course she would choose after her Year 13 studies before coming to the Open Day.

“I am really interested in Trade Diploma in Customs after speaking to the staff at the College of Business, Hospitality and

Tourism Studies booth,” she said.

Liku said she always admired people working at our borders but wasn’t sure if there were any study programmes available.

She said her parents wanted her to decide on a course and she was excited to go back and tell them what she wanted to study.

“My friends have also decided on the courses for next year. I am happy that my school decided to come to the FNU Open Day,” she said.

Liku said she enjoyed the entertainment at the Fiji National University Students’ Association booth.

“I can’t wait to join the University so that I can also take part in these fun activities,” she said.

Some parents of Queen Victoria School students converged at the Nasinu Campus to meet their children with food and other items and also toured the booths with them. It was a fun family affair some.

Esther King said she came to see her son and also brought food for him to take back to the hostel.

“I don’t get to see him often and this was a good opportunity to meet him,” she said.

Mrs King said her son was interested in study Certificate IV in Aircraft Maintenance Engineering – Mechanical, through the College of Engineering, Science and Technology.

“I have asked him to study hard and get good marks in his Year 12 external examination,” she said.

The Open Day was organised to showcase courses and programmes for senior secondary school students and members of the public.



Chyna eyes FNU to pursue her tertiary education

Despite being away from home for the last four years, Chyna Wiram is eager to pursue her Bachelor of Commerce (IR & HRM & Law) from Fiji National University (FNU) and spend another four years in Fiji before moving back to her homeland, Nauru.

Wiram moved to Fiji when she started her year 9 schooling at Ba Provincial Free Bird Institute and after coming to the Open Day she has made up her mind to pursue her studies at FNU.

“Even though I will be away from home for another 4-years, I am confident it will be worth it, since I will be pursuing my dream career at FNU,” she said.

Soft spoken, Wiram says coming to FNU will be the right choice for her. While she understands that the journey won’t be easy it’s something she’s looking forward to with the hope of a great reward at the end.

“I will not only study theory but will be provided with practical aspect. I gathered from the various presentations that I will be taught by professors who have great industrial experience,” she said.

The seventeen-year-old said it’s

important for students to visit events such as university Open Days as it provides them an opportunity to gather important information regarding study programmes and selecting the right one that will lead to a career of their choice.

“Open Day is where you can collect real insight into what your life at FNU could be like. Insider knowledge is a real commodity when it comes to selecting a university. Such events provide an excellent opportunity to experience what university and campus life is all about. I gathered that settling in university is all about developing a rapport with the campus and the people. Definitely it’s all about making friends and growing as an individual,” she said.

In 2015, Wiram moved to Fiji after receiving a government scholarship to pursue her secondary education.

“I have decided that I will only go back to Nauru after I have successfully completed my undergraduate degree from FNU. This will be a gift to my country for trusting me and giving me the scholarship,” she said.



Chyna Wiram of Ba Provincial Free Bird Institute.

Student Highlights



Asenaca Likucali
Ba Provincial Free Bird Institute
Year 13

“I found the FNU Open Day very informative. Next year I plan to do Bachelor of Environment Science. I’m extremely delighted to know that my preferred programme is offered right here at Natabua Campus, which means I don’t have to stay away from family”.



Raksha Rishika Devi
Nadi Muslim College
Year 12

“My childhood dream is to pursue a career in hairdressing and after coming to the Open Day, I am excited to know that FNU offers Certificate III in Hairdressing programme. I got to know that we were learn basic hair cutting, and if in future I open my salon, then how to manage it, while meeting the needs of customers. I will enrol at FNU once I complete my secondary school studies”.



Nischal Kumar
Sabeto College
Year 13

“I am able to figure out my career path after coming to the Open Day. I was well informed and had all my doubts cleared relating to Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBSS) programme from College of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences [CMNHS]. I really enjoyed the FNU Open Day atmosphere and all the booths that I visited were very informative”.



Isikeli Natanu
Ba Methodist High School
Year 13

“This Open Day really assisted me in getting all the required information to pursue Bachelor of Commerce (IR & HRM & Law) programme. I visited all the booths. The displays and information sessions were helpful and interesting. I did grasp all the particulars relating to the career of my choice. The FNU Open Day atmosphere at Natabua Campus was electrifying”.

Tui Macuata backs Fiji National University's expansion plans

The high chief, Turaga na Tui Macuata Ratu Wiliame Katonivere has applauded Government for allocating funds towards the development of the new state-of-the-art Fiji National University Labasa Campus.

Ratu Wiliame said the new Campus will assist in meeting the training and development needs of the people in the northern division.

"I am very happy to say that the Government in its support of the "Look North Policy" and commitment to growing the economic development of the North, has seen it fit to support the building of the new FNU Labasa Campus with a \$6 million capital grant allocated in the 2017/2018 budget and with an additional \$6 million allocation capital grant in this 2018/2019 budget round," said Ratu Wiliame.

"I am thankful to the government for understanding the need to uplift tertiary education in Fiji and in doing so, thinking about the need to support FNU into having its own campus here at Labasa so as to better meet training and capacity-building requirements for developing the economic potential of the northern division."

Speaking at the recent FNU Open Day, in Labasa the Tui Macuata said it was encouraging to note that the enrolment numbers at the FNU Labasa Campus was growing steadily.

"FNU as a tertiary education provider has a very important role to play in bringing education closer to your door steps. This enables students to stay closer to their homes while receiving higher education and ultimately getting their qualifications," said Ratu Wiliame.

Ratu Wiliame, who is the Chairman of the FNU Labasa Campus Stakeholder Advisory Board, said he was actively involved with advocating for training and development during community meetings.

"Talanoa sessions often have a profound impact when organised in a culturally appropriate manner. We will be working closely with the rural communities and as the chairman of the Macuata Provincial Council with other reps here of tikina councils, rural advisory councils and Divisional Development Committee, let me say that we will always be ready to assist FNU in whatever way possible, especially in terms of advocating among our peoples and communities for increased training and capacity-building at FNU," said the high chief.

Students were encouraged to use the Open Day as a platform to explore the programmes offered by FNU and ask academics questions relating to the careers they were interested in pursuing.

Ratu Wiliame said there was a great shortage of skilled and trades workers in Fiji and he encouraged those interested in these fields to take up programmes offered through FNU.

"Make your dreams come true dear students and to parents and guardians, I urge you



(L-R) Turaga na Tui Macuata, Ratu Wiliame Katonivere, CMNHS staff, Vasiti Batirerega, Head of Campus - Labasa, Pardeep Lal after the Open Day opening ceremony at Labasa Civic Centre.

to provide much needed support to our young people here in the North and to help them realise their dreams of gaining qualifications in their chosen fields," said Tui Macuata.

"The government has also made it possible for students to gain tertiary education through Tertiary Education Loan Scheme (TELS) and there should not be any reason why our children cannot gain tertiary education."

"The 2018/19 grant to the Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Board (TSLB) has increased by \$59.1m (30%) to \$255million. Currently TSLB supports 21,049 Fijian students with scholarships and loans; the new grant will allow an additional 4,233 students to benefit from TSLB support."

"Furthermore, the number of students supported by the National Toppers Scholarships (NTS) will increase from 630 to 970, by broadening the range of priority areas in which Fiji needs more highly trained graduates," added Ratu Wliame.

Twenty-four secondary schools visited the Open Day in the northern division which was held at the Labasa Civic Centre.

Student Highlights



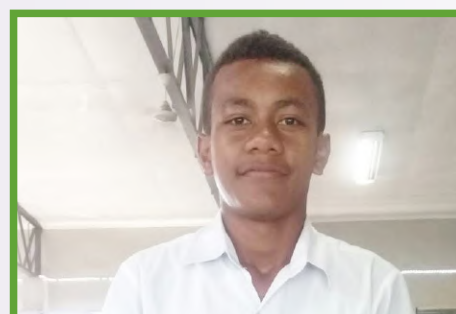
Name: Shaista Shah
School: Labasa College
Year 13

"The friendly and approachable gesture of the staff and students of FNU made our visit even more informative and exciting. I am interested in Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery programme through the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS). I have been able to collect a lot of information about my choice of programme at this Open Day."



Name: Harshana Palika Singh
School: Batinikama College
Year 13

"It has been a great experience to be here, especially at this time when we are about to finish high school and need to decide on what we want to do next. The information gathered from this Open Day will assist me greatly with my choice of profession."



Name: Isikeli Raisuka
School: Valebasoga Secondary School
Year 12

"The virtual tour video about all FNU campuses captured my interest and I am surprised to find out the range of programmes offered by the University at all its campuses throughout Fiji. I am thankful to our school for providing us the opportunity to attend this Open Day and clear the doubts about our choice of programmes."

MY FNU

Wireman Lata's electrifying life journey

Growing up in Navau, a small rural farming and fishing community located along the Kings Highway between Lautoka and Ba, young Roshni Lata did not think that she will grow up to become an electrician and then open up her own electrical retail and contracting company.

Life for the soft spoken, friendly Lata has not been easy but she did not let these obstacles deter her from growing and achieving her goals.

Lata was born in Rakiraki but when she was young, her family moved to Navau, Ba where she has lived ever since.

Growing up, the family faced financial hardships as her brother was the sole bread winner.

Lata attended Sarava Sangam Primary School from 1976 to 1983 and Ba Sanatan College from 1984 to 1987. She completed most of her high school education through scholarships awarded by the school.

Career

Lata was different from other girls. During her childhood days, she was always fascinated by the workings of motor vehicles and was interested to pursue studies related to automotive field. But this was something she was unable to follow through as it was seen as 'not fit for females' by her family in those days.

Given that she did not have much option after completing Form 6 (Year 12), Lata attended a typing school in Ba and successfully attained a Certificate in Stenography. She managed to secure employment with a company in Ba where she worked with the accounts team.

After sometime Lata quit as she yearned to find a profession in trade.

As luck would have it, Lata's uncle, who was an Electrician, came to reside at their place as he had landed a contract in Lautoka. After much convincing, Lata was allowed to travel with her uncle to Lautoka to assist him.

After a few days she found the work very interesting and decided to work full time with her uncle.

"I was really excited to work with my uncle. I felt that this was my break," said Lata.

"I gained a lot of experience. It was tough but I managed to hang on. This attachment opened my eyes and certainly strengthened my goal to become an electrician," she added.

Lata worked for her uncle for one year.

"My uncle was fairly impressed with the knowledge I had gained and then encouraged me to get a formal education. So I explored my options and then decided to join the Fiji National Training Council's (FNTC) Apprenticeship programme," Lata said.

Lata joined Toroca Electrical Works in Lautoka and she managed to completed Stage 1 and Stage 2 in Electrical Engineering from 1989 to 1990.

In 1991, she joined Suncourt Hardware Fiji Limited in their electrical section. She continued her education and attained Stage 3 in Electrical Engineering.

She sat for the Wiremen's License test in 1995 through Energy Fiji Limited (formerly known as the Fiji Electricity Authority) which enabled her to be a licensed electrician.

"It was not easy to juggle work, school and personal life but as my career progressed I pushed myself to study more," said Lata.

"My aim was to get my license and it wasn't easy. But I'm proud that in the end I was able to achieve that. I was also the first female to have set for that test and passed."

Personal Life

Lata got married in 1992 while she was still working for Suncourt Hardware. She resigned a year later to take care of her newly born baby girl.

After receiving the Wiremen's License in 1995 she joined Vinod Patel and Company Limited in Ba and was later transferred to Lautoka, where she worked till 2001.

Her life took an unfortunate turn in late November 1999 when her mother passed away. Shortly after, in February 2000 Lata lost her husband.

Fate continued to challenge her will-power, as Lata then lost her father in July and then her house was destroyed in a fire in November of the same year.

"It was a very difficult time for me. I had lost all hope as I lost my parents and my husband and then our house was burnt down. It was a tragedy," said an emotional Lata.

"I was shattered as all of them were my support. I was left with my daughter. And I knew I



Roshni Lata guides her staff at a worksite in Lautoka.

had to re-build my life again. It was not easy. I knew I had to be strong and have faith."

"I had been through so much, I told myself that nothing can break me down now," she added. Armed with this motivation, she decided she needed to start her own business. This was the only way Lata knew she would be able to meet her expenses and raise her daughter.

With her life savings and assistance from a few friends, Lata managed to obtain some electrical equipment on credit and started Roshni's Electrical in Lautoka on 23rd May 2001.

"I knew that the best way to get back on my feet was to become my own boss. So I took a chance and started my company. I knew a few people and they assisted me. A lot of people knew my work and they came to me with small contracts and before I knew it my company was flourishing," said Lata.

Lata's daughter, Swastika Shivani has also followed her mother's footsteps and pursued Certificate in Electrical Engineering from the National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC). Shivani currently works with her mother.

Life Lessons

Lata recalls a message from her high school principal, Parmod Chand Maharaj who said, "Never waste time and never think of any work as menial work." Lata said this message has guided her throughout her life and hopes that it will do the same for others.

She encourages more women to take up trade studies as it provides high employment prospects and it is rewarding.

Lata said every dream starts with self-confidence and discipline.

The Fiji National University's Nikua is a monthly newsletter which aims to promote the University's activities to the wider community.

This newsletter is designed by the University Marketing and Communications team.

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Publisher: Fiji National University | Editor: Ranbeer Singh | Design & Layout: Tomasi Korovou & Vaseva Moroca |

Division Head: Director Marketing and Communications Jenies Mudiliar

Writers: Ranbeer Singh, Kalpana Kaajal, Riteshni Singh, Saleshni Chaudhary, Sharon Chand

Published in partnership with



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