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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Marau to meet Queen Elizabeth**

**SUVA - Fiji Islands.** Being over the moon, would be the best way to describe Mr Joji Marau's emotion as the Head of School of Mechanical Engineering – Higher Education, of the College of Engineering, Science and Technology is still coming to terms with the exciting news that he will be meeting Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, at her home town in Windsor Castle in Britain.

Mr Marau has been invited to attend the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations to be held in May. The man from Ogea Island in the Lau groups will be no ordinary guest as he will also be exhibiting this prestigious handiwork the authentic traditional 'Drua' (double hull) Adi Eta, which will be one of the centre pieces during the birthday celebrations.

"I just can't put in words to describe how I felt when I was given the news. I never thought that I will be invited by the Queen for her birthday and to have by canoe displayed for the whole world to see. It's indeed a great honour for me," said Mr Marau.

Designed and built by Mr Marau and his four other craftsmen, Adi Eta will be the centerpiece to represent Fiji to the three day spectacle that has been organised to mark and celebrate another significant date in the Queen's Reign.

Fiji is one of the only four countries from the Commonwealth invited to partake in the birthday celebration and to showcase what Fiji is best known or represented with, a traditional Fijian Drua (double hull canoe), designed and built by Mr Marau was selected to be exhibited at the pageant.

Mr Marau said canoeing was hobby to him from a very young age. In 2012, with the support of Fiji National University, he got his biggest breakthrough when FNU sponsored him in his research work to design and built a traditional canoe – Camakau.

This canoe was recognised globally featuring in the local newspapers and also in the New York Times.

"Canoes have always played an important role in the history of Fiji. Transportation from an island to another was only possible by sea and that with the use of canoes when the first settlers of Fiji arrived, however, with modernisation taking over, tradition and traditional means quickly died out, and canoe building and sailing was many of the unfortunate," said Mr. Marau.

Mr Marau has been invited to appear as guest lecture and speaker at various events on the importance and significance of traditional canoes.

In 2014, he was approached by Professor Steven Hooper from the University of East Angli in the United Kingdom to work with a Non-Government Organisation in Germany in the designing and building of a two hull canoe to feature in an exhibition organised by the organisation. Thus, the birth of *Adi Eta* transpired.

Built in 2014, the *Drua - Adi Eta* as it's known – is the only authentic traditional double hull canoe to have been built after the *Ratu Finau*, which is now kept and displayed at the Fiji National Museum.

*Adi Eta*, the double hull canoe stands at 8 meters in length and 2.15 meters in width and is made from Damanu tree from the interior of Viti Levu in Nakorosule, Naitasiri.

Due to unforeseen circumstance, *Adi Eta* was not exhibited at its planned venue, but it was not the end of the road for the double hull.

*Adi Eta* was then used locally in canoe racing where it hailed victory in the 2014 during the Hibiscus Canoe Race. In 2015, *Adi Eta* was used as a float by the Fiji Broadcasting Cooperation to transport their Queen for the Vodafone Hibiscus Festival.

As its success story continues, *Adi Eta* will now feature as Fijis display masterpiece at Her Majesty's Birthday Pageant scheduled from the 12 – 15 of May.

Proud of the achievement, Mr Marau said the passion and interest in traditional canoes has been revived.

“The successful completion of the making of the *drua* was a breakthrough in itself. Now with the pageant, it shows we have achieved what we started years ago and that was to revive traditional sailing,” said Mr Marau.

The head of school said, the invitation from the UK brings him a lot of emotion and happiness because it shows they are interested.

“In designing *Adi Eta* we had to refer also to the libraries in London to help us because we don't have records available locally on literature aspects in making a *Drua*. My four member team of craftsmen was too good because they knew exactly what they were doing.

In the final day of the pageant, the Queen, Members of the Royal Family, government and international delegations will tour and inspect the displays.

Days after the birthday celebration, *Adi Eta* will then be transported down to Norwich where it will be showcased in an exhibition later in August before it moves to its new home the National Maritime Museum, where it will be maintained and kept.

**For further information, contact the Communications Office on 339 4000 extension 2890/2886.**