

## Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts, Hon Rosy Akbar undertakes first official duty at Fiji National University (FNU) – Contract signing of a four-storey building



*FNU Staff presents traditional sevusevu to the Turaga Na Tui Kalabu, Ratu Paula Maiwiriwiri*

Investment in training and facilities will provide an efficient and productive workforce. These were the words of newly appointed Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts Honourable Rosy Akbar, while officiating the contract signing of a four-storey building at the Fiji National University (FNU) Nasinu Campus this morning.

Also present at this ceremony was the Turaga Na Tui Kalabu, Ratu Paula Maiwiriwiri. The high chief was accorded a traditional sevusevu led by the staff of the university seeking his blessing prior to the commencement of the construction work.

The new complex for the College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies will consist of 14 classrooms with a 350 plus student capacity lecture theatre.



*FNU Vice-Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey with Education Minister Rosy Akbar*

Education in the early 90's spoke fondly of her time at the College and said it was important to ensure that students have access to modern facilities and training equipment.

She said providing proper facilities and good relevant programmes that are targeted towards supporting economic growth will continue to uplift the quality of graduates and ensure a smarter Fiji.

"This building will provide students with state-of-the-art facilities and access to modern technologies. Our young minds must be given the same opportunities for access to information as their counterparts around the world and keeping this in mind, the building will be equipped with modern ICT facilities and will have access to free high-speed wifi for online learning. This is supported by government's Walesi free wifi hotspot initiative," said Minister Akbar.

Government has allocated \$19 million to FNU as capital grant in the 2018-19 national Budget for various projects which includes this investment spread across three years.

The Minister stated that government's financial support towards FNU was a testament of its commitment towards uplifting the education system and providing quality education to all Fijians.

FNU Vice Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey said the new complex is an integrated "one stop shop" for student services which will provide centralized student academic support enabling easier access to student information and enrolment.

"It also marks a new phase of the University's development, in which we will be demolishing old wooden buildings which have reached the end of their economic life and making a major investment in new state-of-the-art facilities worthy of a national university in the 21st century," said Professor Healey.

The project which will be built by Cope Construction Limited is expected to be completed by mid-2020.

Professor Healey said the new CBHTS building is one of the many projects being undertaken as part of the university's transformation.

"We will shortly begin construction of a new sports complex, with an indoor basketball court with bleacher seating for tournaments, a large cardiovascular and free weights training area and four flat, multi-purpose exercise rooms. This project is part of the University's wider attempt to address the issue of obesity and NCDs here in Fiji, by providing high-quality recreational exercise facilities for students and staff," the VC said.

"This year, we carried out a Campus Master Planning exercise, to determine the optimal layout or zoning of our campuses, which buildings need to be replaced and which new buildings need to be constructed to create a 21st century university. We now have a ten-year master plan for each of our major campuses in Suva, Nadi, Lautoka, Ba and Labasa."

"With generous support from the Fiji Government, FNU currently has an annual capital investment programme of \$50m. This means over the next ten years, we plan to spend \$500m - \$0.5bn – transforming our campuses into modern, digitally connected social learning spaces," Professor Healey added.

VC Healey stated that later next year, the University will begin work on a new Creative Arts Centre, to replace the Raiwai campus that was damaged in TC Winston.

"Our vision is for a building with a television and radio station, a theatre for the performing arts and spaces for fine art and design, which will provide a cultural heart to the campus and reach out to the community to provide access to affordable theatre, music and film," said VC Healey.

There are also plans for an administration building and a hospitality hub, with training kitchens and restaurant to prepare chefs of the future.



*FNU Vice-Chancellor Professor Healey signs the contract for the construction of the FNU CBHTS building alongside Cope Construction Limited Director Satya Sekram*