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**PRESS RELEASE**

**12 students from Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) graduate from FNU**

**Republic of Marshall Islands.** Fiji National University's first-ever graduation ceremony for Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) students was held on Saturday (9 June) at International Convention Center, in Delap, Majuro Atoll.

The University graduated 12 students who had completed Postgraduate Diploma in Nursing as a Nurse Practitioner (NP) through the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS).

The students graduated in the presence of hundreds of excited families and friends.

Speaking at the graduation ceremony, FNU Chancellor and Council Chair, Mr Ikbal Jannif said it was a significant day for tertiary education in Marshall Islands and indeed for the partnership between the Fiji National University and the people of Marshall Islands.

"The team from Fiji National University is honoured to be present in your country to celebrate your achievement," he said.

Mr Jannif said FNU will continue to assist and support the development of human resource in health in the region because of the commitment through the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences.

FNU Vice Chancellor, Professor Nigel Healey said the ceremony was particularly noteworthy, because it was to honour the achievements of a dedicated cohort of Nurse Practitioners and the contribution they will make to the health status of the nation.

"Nurse Practitioners are a special breed of nurses with the advanced qualifications and the clinical experience and expertise necessary to diagnose and treat health conditions," he said.

Professor Healey said the University was looking forward to welcoming the graduates back to the University to take further qualifications in order for them to keep up with changes in health care.

RMI's Minister for Health and Human Services, Honourable Kalani R. Kaneko said his ministry requested assistance from Pacific Island Health Officers' Association (PIHOA) and FNU to develop a primary care nurse practitioner program for the RMI.

He said the programme was requested to jointly address the shortage of health providers in primary health care practices.

"These 12 Nurse Practitioners are poised to become capable primary care providers. They are considered a backbone of the primary care workforce in many countries including the US, Canada, Australia, Fiji, RMI and others," he said.

Mr Kaneko said the new graduates will be stationed in various clinics and wards at Ebeye and Majuro Hospitals.

"The number of years these Nurse Practitioners have served as graduate nurses at both hospitals range from 7-27 years of service to the Ministry. There is no doubt that with their added skills and knowledge as Nurse Practitioners that they will continue to serve to the best of their ability," he said.

One of the graduates, Richard Rang said the programme was very intense and he had to put in a lot of effort during his studies period.

"For me, it was coming back to school after a long time and it took me few months to adjust," he said.

Mr Rang said he was looking forward to working with the doctors to improve the health of his people.

Oling de Brum who was the Director of Primary Health Care on the island of Ebye in RMI before starting studies said she decided to do the programme because there are no local doctors on her island.

“I believe that local people will understand issues with their health more with someone who understands their language,” she said.

Oling said she was able to complete the programme because it was held in her home country and she was able to work full time while studying.

“I wanted to drop out within the first month but was encouraged by FNU staff to continue and finish the programme,” she said.

The entire programme was completed in RMI with academic staff from Fiji National University travelling on a regular basis in the 18-month duration of the programme.

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**About the Fiji National University:** The Fiji National University (FNU) was established through the merger of 7 government-owned tertiary institutions in Fiji, and commenced operations from 1 January 2010. The constituent institutions are found at over 40 different locations across Fiji, and collectively offer Certificates, Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas, Degrees, Postgraduate qualifications and Skills Upgrading for those who are already in employment. Approximately 30,000 students pass through the University each year. Over the last six years of its operations, the University has registered major achievements with regard to new programme delivery, quality improvements and contribution to research and publications via its 5 Colleges: The College of Humanities & Education (CHE), the College of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences (CMNHS), the College of Engineering, Science & Technology (CEST), the College of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry (CAFF), the College of Business, Hospitality & Tourism Studies (CBHTS) and the National Training & Productivity Centre (NTPC).