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## Press Release

### Reading therapy brings smiles to paediatric patients

**Lautoka, Fiji Islands.** Future teachers enrolled at Fiji National University's (FNU) College of Humanities and Education (CHE) are exploring new dimensions of knowledge and teaching methodologies by providing reading sessions for children admitted at the Lautoka Hospital.

Seventeen first year Bachelor of Education (Primary) students enrolled at Natabua Campus are part of a program that aims to make the hospital atmosphere a little less overwhelming and whole lot brighter for the children.

CHE Assistant Professor in Education, Dr Sunil Kumar initiated the program to provide experience to future teachers to read to patients admitted at the paediatric ward.

"We have named the club '*The Inclusive Club*' and our aim is to assist providers to better engage and calm the child through providing meaningful, positive literacy messages," he said.

Dr Kumar stated that this type of activities enhances and prepares our graduate teachers to think about capacity and community building.

"This helps the students to become empathy listeners and treat children with empathy. Our students are really excited about these learning experiences. On the day of reading to the patients, students really broke down with emotions listening about the suffering and the sicknesses of the children at the hospital," he said.

The readings sessions provides the parents a breather when children are engrossed in the books.

Dr Kumar says that the reading therapies are aimed at intellectual development, socialisation and development of motor skills in children, as well as create understanding and serves as a distraction.

"We also intend to relieve stress and boredom, encouraging development and independence and building rapport and positive experience for the children admitted," he said.

The club members devote an hour every Friday to read to children.

The team is currently finalising plans for its next project which is to provide grooming and reading sessions for senior citizens at the Golden Age Home in Natabua.

The ultimate goal of the project is to let our future teachers know that teaching is not just teaching the curriculum to the students in the school settings, it is beyond that it is about capacity and community development. The outcome of this project will enhance our future teachers to serve in their respective '*vanuas*' and help the community grow in the areas of needs.

**For further information, please contact Salesni Chaudhary on Email: [salesni.chaudhary@fnu.ac.fj](mailto:salesni.chaudhary@fnu.ac.fj) or Phone: 6667355 ext. 7097**

**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).