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PRESS RELEASE

Partnership to enhance labour market research and analysis

Suva, Fiji Islands.

The Fiji National University (FNU) and the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations have formalised partnership to promote and collaborate on research and educational cooperation.

FNU Vice Chancellor, Professor Nigel Healey and Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations, Hon Jone Usamate signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at Nasinu campus earlier today.

Professor Healey said the MoU serves as the foundation of a deep and mutually beneficial partnership between the University and the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations.

He said together with providing the skilled labour to drive Fiji's economic growth, FNU is also committed to using its research capabilities to assist with the nation's policy priorities.

"By focusing on employability, we ensure that FNU underpins the continued economic development of Fiji," said Professor Healey.

"This year in Fiji, 22 percent of public expenditure is devoted to education. We need to ensure that students are equipped with the knowledge and skills to succeed. The nightmare scenario is that tertiary enrolments expand endlessly, while graduates sit idly at home, unwanted and unemployed."

"It is clear that the Ministry has access to hugely valuable secondary data that could help researchers at FNU address questions like the future demand for skilled labour and in doing so assist the Ministry itself to plan for the future," Professor Healey added.

The agreement focuses on both knowledge creation through research and innovation to ensure sustainability and economic wellbeing of communities in Fiji and the region. In pursuant to these objectives, the activities of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) include:

1. Collaboration and information exchange on past, current and future status of labour employment, productivity and wages issues;
2. Exchange of research ideas, expertise and knowledge. This will include the promotion of productivity movement in Fiji whereby strengthening the delivery of capacity of the National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) to improve productivity at the enterprise level in both the public and private sectors through the workplace Labour-Management Consultation and Cooperation Committees. The NTPC will also be involved with providing

training and consultancy services to organisations so that they become efficient, productive and can compete in the domestic, national, regional and global market.

3. Exchange of technical assistance;
4. Joint research work including the funding of research activities related to the Ministry's area of interest.

Following the signing, the Hon Minister Usamate said he expects to see an increase in the number of labour market research and analysis undertaken for Fiji.

“Researches will add-value to our society. Together we can establish new knowledge and learning and even establish standards and best practices for our people and the industries,” said the Hon Minister.

“The new knowledge attained should add-value to students learning who will then add-value in the workplace through better standards and practices that improves individual and organisational productivity. Research and development initiatives make learning exciting, enjoyable and off course rewarding.”

Hon Usamate said many of the new learnings and practices can be home grown or re-engineered to suit our needs and be classified and labelled as locally made which will result in the creation of new products and services.

“What better place to start and multiply this research and development than through our own national university.”

“The multiplier effect of research and development is huge. The image and reputation of FNU will increase. Likewise, the quality of both students and lecturers will improve. Knowledge will improve, contributing to our increased standards of living,” Hon Usamate added.

For further information, please contact Kalpana Kaajal on Email: kalpana.kaajal@fnu.ac.fj or Phone: 3394000 ext. 2886

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).