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## PRESS RELEASE

### Recycled Plastic apparel to become new fad

**Lautoka, Fiji Islands.** Eleven Fiji National University (FNU) students who are studying to become teachers based at the Natabua Campus, unveiled a clothing line made out of recycled plastics in a bid to create more awareness during World Environment Week which is globally celebrated from 5-8 June.

The students strutted their design ware at the *'Na Were Levu'* lecture theatre during the World Environment Week celebrations, which drew huge applause from invited guests, academics and students.

Nineteen year-old Vilikesa Batikalau said through his designs he tried to convey the message to protect the environment by recycling variety of plastic trash and turning it into creative fashion ware.

"I opted for the theme to recycle and reuse plastics, whereby I tried to showcase women's wear made of recycled garbage bag, straws and disposal plastic cups and plates," said the first year Bachelor of Education student.

The Tavua lad always had an interest in designing but never had the opportunity to showcase his talent publicly.

"Through my designs I want to display that making a garment using recycled plastics are not expensive and is cheaper as well as environmentally friendly," he added.

Batikalau is also working on designing footwear using recycled plastic.

Lecturer in Home Economics, Miriama Namosimalua who initiated the creative project with the students said it was about time people realized the harm plastics were doing to the environment. She said it was important for people to take steps to use alternative choices instead of plastic bags.

"We need to make changes in our everyday lives to reduce the heavy burden of plastic pollution on our environment and our health. And the most appropriate way is to recycle it into garments, which is an everyday need for us," said Namosimalua.

She said the fashion parade showcased, colourful attires using straws, cups, plates, and spoons, in line with the World Environment Week theme *'Beat Plastic Pollution'*.

"Plastics are disposed or rejected after usage and is deemed to be worthless or unneeded. However, what we tried to showcase is that nothing is worthless and most of the plastics can be recycled rather it ending in the rubbish dump," said the senior lecturer.

Namosimalua was very impressed with the designs and concepts exhibited by the students.

"I am really proud to see the creative flair of our students particularly from the non-home economics students, they really displayed that we at FNU not only provide an enabling studying environment, but provide them with an opportunity to showcase and display their innovative skills," she said.

Being in the textile field for a number of years now, Namosimalua said it was her dream to see that Fijians collect and recycle plastic waste into thread and woven fabric for use in apparel, shoes and other accessories.

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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).