



Honorable Ro Filipe Tuisawau

Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services & Transport

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT 5 SEPTEMBER 2024

**NATIONAL UPDATE ON WATER SECTOR DELIVERABLES IN 2023 TO 2024
AND PROGRAMMED FOR 2024 TO 2025**

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to address this august house on my Ministerial Statement :

The Honourable Prime Minister, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, Members of Parliament, fellow Fijians, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for the opportunity to address and elaborate more through this Ministerial Statement on the water sector 2023/2024 achievements & 2024/2025 major plans and status update. I will also update the house on the status of our various water catchments given the dry weather recently experienced and still affecting areas of Fiji.

Mr. Speaker Sir, the Ministry with the Water Authority of Fiji has made significant strides in both infrastructural and institutional development, ensuring that the people of Fiji have access to reliable, safe, and sustainable water and wastewater services as constituted and mandated under WAF Act. Allow me to highlight these achievements under two key categories: Institutional Achievements and Infrastructural Achievements.

Institutional Achievements

1. Launch of the Water Sector 2050 Plan:

Mr Speaker Sir, this is a landmark achievement where the Coalition Govt launched the Water Sector 2050 Plan in April 2024, a visionary roadmap that outlines Fiji's water sector and wastewater priorities for the next three decades. This comprehensive plan is designed to transform how water services are delivered across the nation. It addresses the challenges of climate vulnerability, renews aging infrastructure, and aligns with the principles of the circular economy.

Furthermore, it is a crucial step and clear roadmap in our ongoing efforts for clean and accessible water.

2. Introduction of WAF's e-Service Platform:

Mr Speaker Sir, in our commitment to improving customer service, WAF launched its e-Service platform. This online service provides our customers with easy access to their accounts, allowing them to pay bills and report any queries with just a few clicks. This digital transformation is a significant step forward in making services more accessible and efficient, particularly for those in remote areas.

3. Water Production and Non-Revenue Water (NRW) Reduction:

Mr Speaker Sir, From August 2023 to July 2024, WAF produced a total of 130,771 Mega Litres of water, demonstrating our capacity to meet the growing demands of our population. A key focus this year has been on reducing Non-Revenue Water (NRW). I am pleased to announce that, through diligent efforts, a reduction in NRW from 47% in 2023 to 45% in the first half of 2024 was achieved. This 2% reduction may seem modest, but it represents a significant accomplishment, resulting from extensive work in leak detection, infrastructure maintenance, and customer engagement.

4. Increased Water and Wastewater Connections:

Mr Speaker Sir, during the Financial Year 2023/2024, WAF successfully increased water connections by 2,257 and wastewater connections by 96. This growth in connections is a direct result of the extension projects carried out in financial year 2022/2023, which expanded the network to reach more households and communities. The increase in connections reflects the rising demand from customers to connect to reliable water and wastewater services. This growth underscores Govt commitment to expanding access to clean water and efficient wastewater services across the country.

Infrastructural Achievements

1. **Urban Water Projects:**

Mr Speaker Sir, WAF has made significant progress in enhancing urban water infrastructure, ensuring that more Fijians have access to reliable water services.

During the Financial Year 2023/2024, a total of 31.57 km of pipeline extensions were completed, benefiting 47,350 Fijians. A key highlight of this achievement is the Sawani to Viria pipelaying project, which involved the installation of 24.5 km of new pipeline, directly benefiting 6,500 Fijians. This project was made possible by the completion of the Viria Packaged Water Treatment Plant, a state-of-the-art facility that has a capacity of 40 Mega Litres. As a responsible Coalition Govt we shall continue to enhance and expand

from developments of previous governments. As a result of this project, areas that previously experienced intermittent water supply are now receiving a consistent and reliable water service and of course more will benefit as we expand the networks.

Mr. Speaker Sir, another major accomplishment during this financial year was the completion of the Nabouwalu Packaged Water Treatment Plant, a 2 Mega Litre facility that now serves over 5,400 Fijians. This project marks a significant improvement in water supply for the Nabouwalu area, ensuring that residents have access to clean and safe water. Very soon we will be seeing the commissioning of this project. In addition to these projects, WAF successfully installed backup generator sets at 14 major pump stations. This critical infrastructure upgrade ensures that power is available during outages, allowing WAF to maintain uninterrupted services across key urban areas.

2. Rural Water Scheme Projects:

Mr. Speaker Sir, WAF has successfully completed 10 Rural Water Projects, benefiting 2,905 Fijians who previously lacked access to a proper water supply. These projects involved the construction of new water schemes and the installation of standpipes and shower heads in households, providing these communities with a reliable and safe water source. I should add that the Ministry continues to work closely with and support Rotary Pacific Water for Life Foundation, Fiji Water Foundation, Vodafone Foundation, LDS Church, Aust Govt, NZ Govt and other development partners to continue to support access to safe water in rural Fiji. These organisations have all made significant contributions to access and availability of safe water for our rural communities and I commend them.

3. Delivery of Rainwater Harvesting Tanks

Mr Speaker Sir, as part of our commitment to ensuring water security in remote areas, 3,151 rainwater harvesting tanks was delivered across four regions, benefiting 15,755 households. Notably, the most recent deliveries included 168 tanks to the Yasawa Tikina and Nacula Tikina, areas that have long faced challenges in accessing clean water. Low Pressure and intermittent supply areas such as Sakoca have also been assisted.

Mr. Speaker Sir, in addition to our infrastructural and institutional achievements, WAF has significantly strengthened its presence on regional and international platforms, marking Fiji on the world map as a Pacific leader in water management and climate resilience. WAF proudly participated in the 14th Pacific Water and Wastewater Association (PWWA) Conference and the 7th Pacific Water Ministers Forum, where we shared insights and collaborated with counterparts from across the Pacific region.

Mr. Speaker Sir, most notably, WAF recently represented Fiji at the International Water Association (IWA) World Water Congress & Exhibition in Canada. This prestigious event brought together global leaders in water management, and it is with great pride that I

announce WAF's recognition on this world stage. WAF was honoured with the Climate Smart Utilities Recognition Award 2024, a testament to our ongoing efforts to integrate climate-smart practices into our Water projects and operations.

Mr. Speaker Sir, achieving this award on an international level not only recognises the hard work and dedication of WAF and staff but also signifies that Fiji's initiatives are being acknowledged by international donor partners.

Mr. Speaker Sir, these achievements reflect the Ministries and WAF's unwavering commitment to improving water and wastewater services for all Fijians. The progress made in the past year sets a strong foundation for future initiatives as outlined in the Water Sector 2050 Plan. Challenges need to be overcome and opportunities seized to enhance the quality of life for our people through better water services.

I commend the hard work of all those involved in the Ministry and all WAF Staff and contractors. I particularly commend the dedication and hard work of staff involved in the mud, rain and at all hours during emergency situations with commitment and dedication to restore water supplies to affected Fijians.

Mr. Speaker Sir, the significant initiatives and strategic plans that the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) has been set in motion for the Financial Year 2024/2025. The allocation of \$259.45 million underscores our government's unwavering commitment to enhancing water and wastewater services across Fiji, ensuring that every Fijian has access to clean and safe water while addressing critical issues within our infrastructure. A substantial portion of budget, \$135.82 million, is dedicated to Capital expenditure, while \$123.63 million will cover Operational costs. These funds will be channeled towards crucial programmes that will directly benefit Fijians and address pressing challenges within our water sector.

Water Programme

Mr Speaker Sir, the heart of WAF's plans lies on the Water Programme, with a significant allocation of \$82.27 million. This programme is pivotal in addressing water supply challenges and improving infrastructure across our nation. A key priority within this programme is the Non-Revenue Water (NRW) initiative, which has been allocated \$5 million. Water loss through leaking pipes remains a significant issue. To combat this, WAF is engaged in a Performance-Based Contract for Non-Revenue Water Reduction, specifically targeting the Suva-Nausori and Nadi-Lautoka corridors. This contract, managed through the engagement of a specialist NRW contractor, aims to drastically reduce water losses, ensuring that more of our precious water resources reach our people.

Mr. Speaker Sir, the Water Programme also encompasses a series of essential upgrades and expansions, categorised into three major sections:

a) **Water Packaged Treatment Plant Projects**

This includes the development and upgrading of several critical water treatment plants, which are crucial for ensuring the delivery of clean and safe drinking water. Key projects under this section are:

- o Benau Water Treatment Plant
- o Consultancy services for the Wainadoi Water Supply Scheme
- o Construction of the Navua Packaged Water Treatment Plant

b) **Water Mains Upgrading Works**

Mr. Speaker Sir, these projects focus on enhancing water distribution networks across the country, ensuring reliable water supply to various regions. The upgrades include:

- o In the Central Division: RKS and QVS upgrade works
- o In the Northern Division: Labasa Operation Upgrade, Nabouwalu Operation Upgrade, and Savusavu Operation Upgrade
- o In the Western Division: Dreketi Feeder Road Upgrade, Vuda Rider Water Mains Upgrade, and Wairabetia Water Mains Upgrade

c) **Pipeline Extension Projects**

Mr. Speaker Sir, the extension of pipelines is crucial for expanding water supply coverage, particularly in underserved areas. These projects include:

- o In the Central Division: Korovou to Veinuqa Extension, Lokia Pipelaying Works, Sawani to Colo-i-Suva (this is especially important as it will alleviate current water problems in elevated areas such as Coloi Suva, Tacirua, Sakoca, Tamavua, Delainavesi and Lami and entail laying of 1.43KM from Sawani junction to a new pump station at Buresasa then to Coloi Suva where 2 new 5 ML Steel Reservoirs will be built then to Khalsa Rd junction) and Bilo Extension Project (installation of 3 km pipeline, new pump station & new reservoir – will alleviate water needs of Bilo Settlements who had been drinking from wells for years until action was taken by the Coalition Govt)
- o In the Northern Division: Benau to Rara Pipeline, Nabekavu Mains Extension, and Degau Extension

- o In the Western Division: Sigatoka Water Coverage Extension (this include 3 Sub Projects ie Vusama/ Navisabasaba, Nadralla and Waibogi Villages involving laying 16KM water mains. Some of these villages had suffered from water borne diseases due contaminated water. The Momi extension has also brought about huge relief. For these villages in the Nadroga Nadi areas, it was total injustice for them to avail their land for major hotel developments without their water needs being met. Again urgent action needed to be taken and is now being rectified by the Coalition Govt. The other major project is the Nagado to Nadele Pipeline from the Nagado Water Treatment Plant to Nadele involving the supply and installation of 1.48KM pipeline which will significantly increase the discharge volume and hydraulic capability. This will meet and sustain the growing demand for water in the Nadi Lautoka regions due to major developments such as in housing and tourism and redundancy options for future extensions. In addition, the additional second Nagado Water Treatment Plant , more modern and automated is close to completion and will add further capacity for back up and alleviate redundancy situations eg assist to keep output normal when there is high turbidity.

Asset Management Programme

Mr. Speaker Sir, a crucial part of our strategic approach involves the Asset Management Programme, with an allocation of \$8.54 million. This programme is designed to ensure the optimal functionality of our existing infrastructure. The funds will be used to develop comprehensive Master Plans, conduct feasibility studies, and execute conditional assessments of our current assets.

Key projects under this programme include:





- The Lami-Nausori Wastewater Masterplan, which will guide the future development of wastewater infrastructure in these areas.
- A feasibility study for a new water source and treatment plant for the Nadi-Lautoka region, addressing the growing demand for water in this vital economic hub.
- The development of a Masterplan for the Suva-Nausori Water Supply, ensuring the long-term sustainability and efficiency of water services in our capital and surrounding areas.
- A Masterplan for the Keyasi Water Supply and Wastewater Scheme, which will focus on improving services in this rural region.

Mr. Speaker Sir, as I speak, the tenders for the masterplans will be advertised in coming weeks.

Wastewater Programme

Mr. Speaker Sir, the Wastewater Programme, with a budget of \$8.50 million, is another critical focus area. Only 28% of our population currently has access to sanitation services provided by WAF. This programme aims to expand and improve these services, particularly in underserved areas.

Projects under the Wastewater Programme include:

-  The rehabilitation of the Pacific Harbour Wastewater Treatment Plant, which is essential for maintaining environmental standards and protecting public health in this key tourist destination.
-  The cleaning and upgrading of the Kinoya Wastewater Treatment Plant's sludge lagoon and line works, a vital project that will enhance the plant's capacity and efficiency.
-  The installation of new diffusers at the Wailada Wastewater Treatment Plant, which will improve the treatment process and ensure better effluent quality.
-  In addition, the Coalition Govt has also acted quickly in light of the increased demand and deteriorating water and sewer reticulation systems to Denarau Island. We recognize the importance of Denarau to the Tourism Industry and to our wider National Economy especially businesses, employees, service providers and of course the landowners of Denarau. The waste water and water systems for Denarau was built in the 1970s with minor enhancements to date, for basically 1 hotel ie the Regent of Fiji Hotel. Today there are 9 resorts with over 2000 rooms, water park, golf courses , residential lots and a Marina with Shopping and Restaurants Complex. Hotel developments are ongoing with plans for substantial developments underway inside and adjacent to Denarau. Govt has provisioned in excess of \$15M with possible cost sharing options for the Denarau Island Infrastructure Design / Build Upgrade Works which has been put to Tender. The project will involve the upgrade and replacement of existing sewer pump stations, sewer rising main, sewer reticulation and new water mains.

Mr. Speaker Sir, there is also a critical need for spares, fixtures, and fittings to upgrade wastewater treatment plants in the Central and Western regions. These upgrades are not just about maintaining our infrastructure; they are about safeguarding the health and well-being of our people.

Rural Water Programme

Honourable Mr. Speaker Sir, in our commitment to enhancing water services in rural areas, a dedicated allocation of \$7.54 million has been earmarked for the Rural Programme. This funding will support several critical initiatives aimed at ensuring clean and reliable water access for rural communities across Fiji. Key components of this programme include:

- Rural Water Carting in Non-Metred Areas: Allocated \$4 million, this initiative ensures that remote and non-metred areas receive regular water deliveries, addressing the immediate water needs of these communities.
- Rainwater Harvesting: With \$1.4 million set aside, this initiative promotes the sustainable practice of harvesting rainwater, particularly vital during periods of intermittent water supply. The Authority strongly encourages all Fijians to actively participate in rainwater harvesting to supplement their water needs.
- Rural Water Supply Scheme: An allocation of \$2.11 million has been dedicated to implementing water supply schemes in the Central, Western, and Northern regions. These schemes are designed to provide clean and safe water to over 4,000 Fijians living in these areas. There is provision to expand this as the year progresses.

Mr. Speaker Sir, those projects above are vital to improving the quality of life in rural communities, ensuring that every Fijian, regardless of their location, has access to safe and sustainable water resources. The plans laid out for the Financial Year 2024/2025 are ambitious, but they are necessary. They reflect the Coalition government's dedication to ensuring that every Fijian has access to clean, safe, and reliable water and sanitation services.

Dry Weather Catchment Update.

Mr Speaker Sir, I wish to provide an update on the status of WAF's major water catchments supply sources around Fiji as of to date. You may aware that we have issued a public advisory through media release on 22nd August 2024 advising the public to use water wisely as the approaching weather conditions may affect the supply of water in the coming months. Thanks to the trough of Low Pressure on the 24th & 25th of August which have brought in temporary relief only to all Central Eastern sources due to heavy rainfall events.

Out of 17 sources, 14 sources have now recovered to normal condition which were either at critical or approaching critical before the low pressure on the 24th of August. Levuka sources remains at critical conditions. Necessary water operations are planned for such situation that is reduce water usage at night to store more water for usage during

daytime. The water level at Waimanu river is now consistently above normal since 24th August which really assist the water sources at Waila and Tamavua Plant.

Mr Speaker Sir, for the western division, high rainfall was observed on 25/08 where out of the 13 sources in the Western region, 8 is now at Normal 3 at approaching critical and 2 remains at critical condition. A total recovery of 6 days' worth of water supply was recovered for Vaturu in the two-day rain event of the 24/8-25/8. From the 27th onwards, nil to light rain observed for most rainfall stations therefore receding trend observed for most sources as runoff from rainfall event on the 25/08 diminishes.

The Northern Division was the least affected by the trough of low pressure on the 24/8-25/8, as rainfall were not as intense as those recorded in the other two regions. Therefore, out of 16 sources, 12 remains at normal, 1 approaching critical and 3 at critical. Light rainfall was observed from the 27th onwards for Savusavu.

Mr Speaker Sir, with the unpredictable weather changes we may face at least the next 2 months, the Ministry is working closely with relevant authorities and critical sectors such as Tourism, Health and Education in monitoring the situation and planning necessary measures to lessen the effects and to keep the public informed.

We are also working closely with Divisional Commissioners to alleviate water shortages in both on the mainland and maritime areas where Govt Shipping Services barges have been diverted for water relief operations.

I urge all residents to use water sparingly during this period to ensure that the available resources can meet the essential needs of everyone across the country. Simple steps like rain water harvesting , reducing water usage for non-essential activities, fixing any leaks, and reusing water where possible can make a significant difference.

Mr speaker Sir, we will continue to monitor the situation closely and provide updates as needed.

I should add that other Ministries such as Rural & Maritime Development, Health and Lands also have water related projects in their programmes so we will continue to work together in that regard. For example, the Ministry of Lands has been allocated \$5.7M for its Groundwater Assistance Programme.

Finally let me state, that

The Coalition Govt is also expanding its reach for better water services internationally given our limited national coffers. Water cannot be delivered without Energy. The Water Energy Nexus is crucial in this regard and opportunities must be efficiently utilised. We must continue to be reminded that for any Small Island Developing State, such as Fiji, availability and accessibility of basic utilities of water and energy are not only paramount

for daily survival, but more critical offer foundational needs for grassroot communities , enhancing resilience to at least afford a decent level of sustenance and sustainable livelihood, to perk a living over and beyond the poverty line. Water, Power and Roads are crucial to create the impetus.

For Fiji, there is a great community grassroot need to champion this water-energy nexus to alleviate poverty, as this is a genuine catalyst for positive transformational impacts to the daily lives of our people: be it in our inaccessible highland catchment regions or in our smaller distant maritime islands with its unique challenges.

Thus there is a great need for focussed and targeted Water- Energy nexus Climate Financing in the scope of accessing natural spring or ground water resources using the latest solar photovoltaic technology (whether solar powered bore hole pumps or even desalination plants to assist these rural communities). This Energy- Water nexus where programmed innovatively, using a smart national level framework approach, can truly be a lasting transformational catalyst to alleviate poverty, create vibrant rural farming communities to graduate from subsistence level production to smart SME value adding levels, create decent employments that increases disposable income levels into families that shall over and beyond meet basic needs , quality education, leading to other entrepreneurial opportunities that will make such dormant rural villages and farming settlements active participants in the economy, as a whole. This is a vision we will continue to work towards. We are now intensifying Climate Financing Concept Papers and Proposals with the Ministry of Climate Change accordingly around water and energy with great initial support indicated by our Development Partners.

To conclude, the Coalition Govt has taken a significant step in its relationship with catchment landowners with Cabinet approval for the development of a framework policy for compensation of standing trees in catchment areas. We as a Govt will continue to listen and address landowner issues as appropriate within current legal frameworks.

I thank you Hon Speaker for the opportunity to provide this update.

Vinaka vakalevu.

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