

Job Opportunities and Services afforded to Rotuma

Employment based on nepotism can greatly affect the service delivery and Rotuma is not immune to such practice.

As humans, it's instinctively natural that we unconsciously do as a second nature, to have favourites. We practise and refine this art well at home, with our families and friends and also at school and work with our colleagues.

With favourites, nepotism is usually rife when it comes to family, friends and the people that we've great affinity with, to afford them the upper hand over others when competing for jobs. We become bias in our judgement that we provide, glowing references with elements of exaggeration for our favourites. Knowingly that some are not up to standard but merely, a mediocre performer. Such recommendations can always back fire and come back to haunt us.

This is very evident when one is in a position to hire staff. For many applicants would come highly recommended for the position but when it comes to actual performance, then they're found wanting. Often there's a vast difference from what the CV and the reference portrayed. Therefore it's important when hiring, that the *right fit* is hired for the position.

For the task of firing a person becomes very onerous because of stringent employment laws that exist. Disciplining an employee must be seen to be fair and just, to afford the poor performer, every opportunity to prove him or herself. Through the rigmaroles of performance management, weekly reviews and 3 written warnings in monthly intervals to allow for improvement, before the incumbent can be fired. Otherwise there's the union to deal with, besides the possibility of a court case and compensation for unfair dismissal.

Therefore hiring based on nepotism is very counter productive and a major obstacle in the way of strategic changes for improvement, efficiency and increase productivity. For mediocre performers are usually left alone, for fear of upsetting the apple cart and being isolated and ostracised thus hindering the delivery of service and in this instance, the development of Rotuma.

In the 1980s, nepotism was prevalent at Airport Fiji Ltd where the company was basically staffed by the Singhs, Mohammed and the Khans that it was difficult, to get employment there unless of course you have one of the surnames or connections. The dock workers were no difference to this company when Taniela Veitata was the union secretary. Such was the danger, nepotism poses that it not only affects productivity and efficiency but the overall service delivery, resist strategic changes and staff morale.

Apart from my normal work, I led a team for 6 years in our company's quest to win the coveted Australian Quality Service Award. The team was tasked to analyse the workflow processes for the quickest and most efficient way of completing a task. We also looked at

better management and utilisation of resources and how human resources, can work in partnership with the union to achieve the best possible outcomes. **We won the award twice for customer service**, to become the first Funds Manager to win the award in the Superannuation (Provident Fund) industry in Australia. The whole exercise helped to streamline the service deliveries, improve staff productivity and efficiency that resulted in large inflows of investors to the Fund, because of the efficient and exceptional service afforded to customers. Thus *I believe that I have a fair idea of the type of service I'd want to see afforded to Rotuma and will not mince my words* in an effort to prompt actions for improvements.

In that, the most glaring issue I noticed with at least 7 facets of employment in Rotuma is nepotism. The hiring of unqualified, unskilled and inexperienced staff, based on family and friends other than merits. This is a very dangerous hall mark for poor service and low morale that can be very counter productive and a hindrance to development.

I saw a culture that is very powerful and can be difficult to motivate for improvement. There are the kava drinkers who on their own are unmotivated to own a garden, leave alone the ability to work unsupervised when the bosses are not around. Also there are the women who by the appearances of their compounds, say a lot of their behavioural attitudes to work. But alas, these people are employed because of nepotism to serve Rotuma.

Certainly I do acknowledge the fact that people can change for the better and also can be trained to adapt to conditions but it'll take time to be up and running hence the loss of vision, momentum, productivity and certain vital time wastage. But behavioural attitudes are hard to do away with. Never mind how hard one tries to camouflage this but eventually, it'll surface to rear its ugly head, *to identify the poor performer and his or her true colour, similar to a leopard which can not change its spots.*

I have categorised the workers in Rotuma into the following:

- The Smart workers who are very productive for they do just enough but achieves a lot in the same time frame.
- The Competitors whose motivation is not to be surpassed and they do a lot of work both at home and for others.
- The Hard workers who are always busy but achieves a lesser returns to match their efforts.
- The Selfish workers who only work for themselves.
- The Praise Seeker who don't have a garden nor do any work at home but likes to be noticed by working for others especially when there's a crowd around.
- The Lazy workers who laze about at home to recover during the day, after a late night of socialising around a bowl of kava. To be ready for a night out again but don't

have a garden of their own and is dependent on family and friends for support that includes food, the grog and also for cigarettes.

Thus the workers in Rotuma can be easily classified into these groups based on their behavioural attitudes such as punctuality, performance, time management, initiatives, their peoples' skills and service delivery. For such behaviours say a lot about the person and their performance when he or she is unsupervised or the *cat is not around*.

But based on what I saw of the free times some of these workers had, I believe that 80% of the work force in Rotuma will struggle to give a productive account for their time spent at work. The silhouette of their work ethics is evidenced by their productive time at home in the afternoons and weekends, in that many of these workers don't have a garden because they are unmotivated and unsupervised!

Thus my snap shot opinion of the services afforded to Rotuma which may be heavy stuff to many that I am directing my comments at but understand, that all I wanted to do is prompt improvement of services they're responsible and to stop this mediocrity.

I am also aware of stirring a hornet's nest but all I'm doing is reiterating the sentiments echoed by the present Government, to weed out the mediocre performers from the ranks. The message by 2 visiting Officers from the Prime Minister's Office last year was **to report any civil servant found not performing their duties to serve their customers in a good and timely manner** was loud and clear to all civil workers.

Hence allow me to make the observations below and perhaps some of the rankings allocated won't augur well with many. But these were made in accordance with the interactions, experiences and perception that I've had with these service providers. Also by talking and listen to other peoples' experiences. Yet I envisage that this will be a contentious issue amongst those providers that I've been very critical of their service.

Health

The Rotuma Rural Hospital (RRH) is still housed in the same colonial building that I've seen, since I was a little boy. It's very small, in comparison to some of the private hospitals that I was a patient at such as the Sydney Adventist Hospital which is like a hotel and the largest private hospital in the Southern hemisphere but costs a fortune at \$900.00 a night, if without any health insurance. Then there's the Norwest Private, Matar and Mt Wilga besides the public hospitals such as the Royal North Shore, Royal Prince Alfred, West Mead and Mt Kurigai which ofcourse, cost nothing to be a patient of because of Medicare, but there's a long queue for elective surgery.

Pros

The good news is the patient services and care provided by Dr Faktaufon and his staffs at the RRH were very efficient and good indeed. Without a doubt, I can confidently say that Dr

Faktaufon is a very competent, young and up coming doctor who ran the RRH and the auxiliary health services, like a well oiled machine. The services provided to my family and the other patients that went to the hospital were nothing but excellent indeed and can be comparable to any of these large hospitals in Sydney, that my family and I had been a patient.

There're also the value added services for community visitations, after hour calls, clinics for the women and the general public, village sanitation and aerobics training which my daughter in law and wife had the opportunity to attend from 6 - 7.00am on Mondays to Fridays.

Cons

Nil. My only concern is to be wary of nepotism for it can undermine and undo all the good that's been done and the strategic plans in place.

So **thank you doctor for a job well done** and for your personal attendance and care afforded to us during the festive season.

Rating: 10/10

Immigration

Pros

Since Rotuma was made an International Port of Entry there's an Immigration officer stationed at the Police Station. I always see him in the morning and he's punctual to work but rarely seen him off and about during office hours. Maybe he's busy which is a positive sign!

He probably has one of the cosiest jobs in the island. For there's hardly any foreign ships or yachts that called into Rotuma other than the Tuvaluan boat, the MV Niuvaga which makes an average of 2 trips a year to Rotuma to load the taro and the cassava for the trade with Tuvalu that normally lasts for a couple of hours.

Cons

Border Security which should encompass Immigration, Customs and Bio Security should all be housed together in one building in Rotuma for quick response and collective efforts. Thus it'll be interesting to see his processed stats for Rotuma under the freedom of information.

Rating: 9/10

Police

Pros

The extension and renovation's done and hence a new modern facility with a patrol car and a couple of bicycles for quick response and easy mobility around the island. Also the Police the numbers have more than triple from the usual 3 to 10 now to provide a 24/7 service and led by a seemingly competent and experienced Inspector who is assisted by a sergeant, a corporal who is now the crimes office and 7 other constables.

Community involvement and their visible interaction are ongoing and the policing done at the wharf to stem out losses of passengers' goods are a huge plus for their efforts. Also there's a huge improvement in customer service as compared to pre 2010.

Cons

Though I've seen a marked improvement in their service, the force needs to be always wary of the importance of giving feedback and updates to their customers to keep them informed of the happenings after a follow up. These will certainly encourage the community to trust the Police more as a friend, to be able to work together with them in stemming out crime. Most definitely, these will go a long way towards community cooperation and policing.

Also there's the issue with the Marine Safety Laws that is being enforced where people were told that certain requirement had to be met first before one can use a canoe within the lagoons. We had a heated discussion of this with our District Representative in our November district meeting. But I later found out that according to the Marine Board, there's a huge misunderstanding of this specific condition of the Act which needs to be quickly rectified, otherwise only a handful in Rotuma will go out fishing.

Our Itu'tiu District representative will certainly clarify this on his return to the island. Except for those minor glitches that the Officers are already wary of, to be able to stay on top and improve on the good work that they've already built and put in place, for the continued good maintenance of law and order in Rotuma

Rating: 8/10

Roads Authority

Pros

Rotuma's roads were already widened and cleared to allow for at least 2 cars to easily pass each other and are also very clean with ongoing maintenance to crate the road on daily basis.

With the road works already outsourced to a private contractor and workers are happy that the uncertainty has been resolved and they've all got their jobs back. Thus there's no more wasting time at depot.

Cons

A couple of salient points that need to be mindful of, that nepotism seemed rife amongst its employees and this may overlook a lot of good workers and their constant ability to keep the drains clear.

The sand that's removed from the drains must be reused in covering the pot holes on the road to negate the need of truck loads of sand from the Islepi accretion in order to reduce and possibly prevent the soil erosion at Motusa.

Rating: 8/10

District Office/Administration

The main office looks deserted with just the DO in his office who still oversees all the executive functions of Government but still the services provided were helpful and courteous.

Pros

A positive sign of improvement and efficiency gained, by the proper utilisation of modern technology to reduce the number of staff and the associated costs thereof. For gone were the days when there were at least 3 other staffs in the office besides the driver.

The driver is still there and always a gentleman and willing to help and offer his assistance wherever possible. He is responsible for the supervisory duties of all the external work besides organising the work details for the detainee.

Cons

The only hiccup I saw with a one man office band, is when the District Officer is away or sick. The administrative functions tend to slow down, to virtually stand still. Therefore the driver should be fully trained in administrative duties too or a relief be brought in from other departments since the DO is in charge of all the executive functions of Government in Rotuma.

Rating: 7/10

Post Office

Though the work area seemed cramped and congested and there seemed to be very little room for storage and a bulk store and could be the reason besides the Christmas rush for the half empty shelves in the Postshop.

Pros

The service provided at the PO is very professional and helpful. Besides, it is rumoured that about \$2M in remittances were received annually in Rotuma which also impacted the stock on the shelves to help make the Rotuma Postshop the best or one of the best performing shops from the rural and outlying islands.

Cons

The only problem I see with the Rotuma Post Office is the exorbitant fee of 5%, they charge for cashing a cheque except a FNPF cheque. Indeed it's very high and our District Representative has sought advice from the Consumer Council of Fiji.

This fee came about as a result of the PO being defrauded of \$37K by 2 shonky businessmen who still refuse to repay the money but had the gall to threaten the Post Master to declare bankrupt, if they're asked to repay the \$37K when they're still operating several businesses in Rotuma.

Anyone with a bit of pride in themselves will not show their face at the PO nor be so arrogant and pretentious to be honest businessmen, with money to spend to be oblivious to the whispers and funny jabs whenever they're around.

My heart truly bled for the Post Master and I just hoped that he'll follow up the Police to laid criminal charges against these 2 men for he has the support of many in Rotuma including our District Representative who already told me that he's going to help him. **For it is an offence under the Financial Act to issue cheques knowingly that there's no money in their bank accounts and also an offence for obtaining financial advantage by deception** as they've done. Since these 2 men are still operating several businesses in Rotuma, therefore they ain't bankrupt! Therefore the Post Master must ensure that criminal charges are laid and dispatched first before he institutes civil proceedings for recovery. For the Police will have to take all proceeds of their crime, even if the monies are transferred to their wives for what it's worth!

For the fraud is despicable but it's unfair for the PO to impose a hefty fee on the rest of the Rotumans for the sins of these shonky operators. I know that our District Representative has already consulted the Consumer Council for advice and redress from the PO which is currently being looked at.

Rating: 7/10

Agriculture

There are 2 Agricultural officers in the island that are based at Ahau and unknowingly, they perform one of the important functions towards alleviating poverty in Rotuma.

Pros

The ban on the usage of weedicides in Rotuma is a positive step towards protecting the fertility of the soil, the reefs and also our water supply for the health and wellbeing of the islanders and future generations. But they have to get out there to amongst the farmers to ensure that no weedicides are in use. They wouldn't know this as fact if they only hang out in their office and only once a year, do a walk about to inspect the gardens,

Cons

Whilst on the other hand, the ban has had a drastic effect on the farmers who unlike our fathers, can no longer clear the fertile mountain sides to plant because of the over dependent on the weedicides and the over consumption of the kava that makes most consumers sleepy and lazy. For the garden plots are much small now as compared to when the weed killers were prevalently used.

Therefore the 2 Officers need to get out to the farmers and to be more forthcoming in their provision of advice, for sustainable farming and proper utilisation of the land, based on crop rotation and seasonal cash crops in mind. For with the ban on weedicides, farmers need to work smarter and not harder to reduce the *labour intensive* work that's involved. Farmers now need diversity and crops rotation planting, to reduce the clearing and the maintenance of the land.

I went on an inspection of the Adventist men's gardens and it's very obvious that they've grown more food than any other group in Rotuma. Simply because they do occasionally help each other but as teetotallers who also abstained from drinking kava, they are able to get up early to spend time in their gardens at least 6 days a week than most men in the island. Unlike the kava drinkers who often miss to go to their gardens but when they do, they struggled and usually get to their gardens when it's after 10.00am and therefore unable to put up with the hot sun and hence a much smaller garden than the above.

A big surprise for me is the like Maj Gen. George Konrote who lives in Suva and only travels to Rotuma every 2 months or so. But in my opinion this ex-soldier has more food planted than 99% of the men that live on the island which says a lot of the family predicaments there, thus the heavy reliance on remittance to buy rice and flour. Hence a serious contributory factor to the shift of our traditional diet to refine foods which is a cause of obese, diabetes and high blood pressure, for 1 in 3 of the islanders.

Thus it concerned me that with the usual Christmas holidays from 1/12/12 – 14/1/13 where there's hardly any work done in the gardens that I envisaged that, there will be a shortage of taro and cassava between June and September this year. Therefore a concerted effort by these 2 officers to ensure quick crops like sweet potatoes are planted now to cover that short fall, I mentioned above.

Also the 2 officers should be forthcoming with their assistance to help farmers. To access, cheaper micro finance loans and Government subsidies to encourage diversify into animal

husbandry, poultry, fish and sea weed farming. There is an obvious lack of foresight when it comes to such assistance.

Rating: 6/10

Airports Fiji Ltd

The airport management in Rotuma is still the same and so the status quo remained unchanged.

Pro

Since the last runway upgrade, the airport in Rotuma is said to be an all weather one and the third largest in Fiji besides that at Nadi and Nausori. Also the last Air Traffic Controller who was in Rotuma since it opened has retired and was replaced by his son who can always resource his father's experience or fall back on him for advice in an emergency.

Cons

The absence of refuelling facilities is a hindrance to the plane's carrying capacity. Also and because of Rotuma's isolation and the lack of a fire fighting facilities in Rotuma, there's a real need to test the airport's emergency service and preparedness. By involving all the stakeholders such as, the Airport Management, Air Traffic Controller, Fire Officer, WAF, Police, Medics and the designated transporters to gauge the services readiness in case of an emergency. For there's no telling that one will ever be ready in an emergency but at least an assessment can be regularly made of this important preparedness.

Also why is it that the standard service agreement between the land owners and the Airport Fiji Ltd since the inauguration of the airport, for any airline servicing Rotuma being ignored? The ticketing agency was given to this shonky operator who swindled the PO of \$37K without the knowledge of the land owners which is causing a lot of concern. Thus the remark from the acid tongue Council's Administrator "*fa ta re ma te' ne te raksa' atakoa 'ia se 'isa*". I just wonder why nothing was done to rectify this especially by our District Representative who was a former Chairman of the Malha'a Enterprise and the Malha'a District Chief! For I believe that an inquiry should be done to this effect.

Rating: 6/10

The Council

Pros

A new extension was added to the veranda of the council building closes to the road and the market and the pavilion also has been repaired. There's also the Biofuel and REMCOL for the trade with Tuvalu besides the frozen meats out let at the Council which can be very profitable if these are properly managed.

Cons

The administrative staffs have continued as it was with mediocre performances. Therefore all staff should have a *Job Description* and placed on contract. Also all processes should be measured to improve staff productivity.

There should also be a staff performance and a review system in place for performance pay to be implemented.

I am certain that if these are in place that many won't be able to account for the 8 hours they spent at work. For from what I saw, these administrators will be lucky to spend 2 solid hours working each day. Thus giving rise to a need to look at alternatives of, *on need basis, shift and part time workers* rather than full time staff. These will allow for more money to be saved to be channelled to the Rotuma Development Fund for the development and benefit of Rotuma.

For according to our District Representative, both REMCOL and the Biofuel are not in full operation and therefore under utilised. Thus why farmers have lost interest in the trade with Tuvalu and the reason why almost 2 weeks before the next boat is due, there's a shortage of mixed fuel for the generator at Ahau. Hence there is a real need for the administrative staff to improve their performances.

Rating: 5/10

Rural Electricity

Pros

The department has 4 full time staff to operate the 2 new generators on alternate shifts. One of the generators runs on diesel and the other on Biofuel, a mixture of diesel and dried copra oil.

Thus the good news is that the Airport and the High School has got electricity generated from Ahau. But I believe that the best out come is to have their own renewable energy power that's capable of generating enough energy to power all their utilities on the site, for convenience and to be independent of Ahau to avoid the regular power outages.

Also the positive spin off from this is the interactions and the good peoples' skills these workers have in updating people when there's a power cut and outage.

Cons

Was the fuel shortage every month that precipitated the power cuts which is not good for electrical appliances. It should be a vey simple calculation and I would have thought that by now, enough statistics would be available for the office to calculate the number of fuel drums that the generators consume in a month. In order to stock enough supply in Rotuma

for at least 2 – 3 months given the unreliable boat service. But yet this simple compilation is still incorrect after so many years in operations.

Also the loads are getting too much for the generators to use the electric stoves, microwaves and welding equipments like that used at TVET for training.

Rating: 5/10

Education

I am happy to see the plans mooted in 2005/6 came to fruition at the Rotuma High School.

Pros

The good news is TVET is up and running. But my first preference is to see carpentry taught followed by building, plumbing and painting in order to put these skills into practical use in the maintenance of the High School. It's my humble opinion that motor mechanic should be secondary to these, simply because of the difficulty to purchase costly new and second parts given the distance with Suva.

Also form 7 has started at the Rotuma High School this year which will help ease the financial burden on a lot of parents and relieve the pressure on students being relocated to attend foundation at one of the universities or form 7 in Fiji.

Cons

Since Master John Tanu's retirement, the Rotuma High School's academic achievements have fallen with fewer passes which is not a good sign moving forward. Our children will struggle to compete with others for jobs, university places and scholarships with their offsidiers in Fiji.

Thus the School Board and the Principal must ensure now than ever before, that all the teachers at the High School holds a Bachelor degree or is taking the necessary steps to attain one. Also all teachers at the High School should be literacy and numeracy tested to ascertain their suitability to teach before they are accepted to teach at the school. For gone are the days that we should accept any Tom, Dick and Harry as teachers!

One of the things I did when I was the High School Manager was to liaise with Master Tiu Mesulame and later with Master John Tanu to stem out the rort of *teachers absenteeism* from school. Previously, **they'd travel to Fiji during the school holidays to return sometimes 2 weeks after school had already started without prior approval or the knowledge of the MoE for being late.**

Personally it's just not on! For besides the inconvenience caused to the students and the other teachers, these absenteeism teachers still wants to be paid and they did collect their pay cheques when they shouldn't which wasn't right!

However on the 9/2/13, I saw the Head Teacher and another colleague of his from the **Motusa District School at the wharf waiting to catch the boat to Rotuma. This was after schools had already started for about 2 weeks.** Imagine the inconvenience caused! For I believe that there're only 2 other teachers at the said school holding the fort for these late comers which I am sure the Ministry did not know of their absenteeism too.

This particular Head Teacher should know better, that when he is on a private visit to organise a Fiji Development Bank loan to build a bakery and so as the other for a shop, to return in time. If the boat's late than be prepared to pay the \$650.00 fare and catch a flight back. For such absenteeism, without prior approval but still collects a wage, tantamounts to thievery from all tax payers and time from students too.

Thus such teachers got to be disciplined and I hope the Ministry will find these out soon to stem such practise.

Rating: 4/10

Water Authority

In 1979 my first cousin who is a qualified civil engineer from Edinburgh, Scotland did the survey for the bored hole and Fagrafu and his Irish colleague did the one at Lepjea. My father Chief Taksas of Itutiu who was alive then told me that since there were yaws affecting the islanders it was said this was caused by the many community wells and tank waters in used. Hence the reason for the need to bore those 3 holes and have the water tapped to all the houses in Rotuma.

There'd be an initial capital cost which the consumers will have to repay but when this is repaid, Rotuma would have free tapped water, similar to Moala and half of Lakemba and Kadavu too. The islanders were drawn to the proposal and buried most all the wells in Rotuma besides neglecting the community tanks. In that there's now easy access to water in their houses rather than having to carry a bucket to fetch water from either the tanks or the wells.

Thus, except for dad who had this finicky habit not to owe others any money to negate being obligated, he regularly paid his bill in line with that agreement. But when he died in September 1995, I paid his final bill to the PO. Whereas all the other chiefs then who knew of this undertaking with the Water Supply, did not make any attempts to pay a cent for their usage. I knew this as a matter of fact.

However the problem is that there's no signed agreement to this effect and after all these chiefs were dead and gone, there's no legal grounds to stand on when the water's privatised and the Water Authority of Fiji took over.

Luckily, when I was managing the High School that I knew of the school's unpaid water bill since 1979 which now totalled over \$128K. I also foresaw the need to have all the school

tanks repaired, that if there was an outage or a threat of a disconnection that the students won't be inconvenient, for the school to be closed. Thus we had these waters piped to toilets to alleviate any future inconvenience because of the schools monetary constraints to have the ability to pay its water bills to negate any increases in school fees.

Pros

I know that the islanders are very grateful for the Government for providing the Water Authority of Fiji a sum of \$600K to write off all the water arrears in Rotuma.

Cons

Therefore can WAF advise why should Rotuma be treated differently to Moala, Lakemba and Kadavu? For its Rotuma's water and the bored holes are on lands that the Authority inconsistently paid a nominal lease on. Besides this the water pipes were laid across lands that the people own and not the Authority which did not pay a fee on.

I was also told by a reliable source that because of the cost of the fuel supply that all the house holds in Rotuma will be charged the city rates that are applicable for the water with the possibility of disconnection on default. If this is correct than it's unfair for reasons given above and that WAF have not taken the plight of the islanders into account when deciding on the rate to be charged.

But the million dollar question is, why should this be the case? For the Authority has, had ample time since 1979, to do their home work! To install solar operated pumps at the 3 water holes to utilise the abundance of green energy that are readily available in Rotuma. Thus there'd be no need, to wait for the boats for the diesel drums to be brought in from Suva. Certainly the Authority can not blame the abolished Water Supply Department, for it's never too late for them to act now and make that important capital investment. No doubt if the solar pumps are installed, there'll be massive saving gains from the fuel and the costly transport and man hours involved.

Also the Authority should by now have a trained mechanic to maintain the pumps to alleviate the need for referrals for a mechanic to be sent from Suva which would definitely negate the water outages!

Furthermore, the Authority needs to be wary of the increased population in Rotuma during Christmas. A rough estimated would put the island population to have increased between 4 – 500 visitors for this time of the year. This simple knowledge can help future plans for major capital works to be postponed at this time of the year to avoid any inconvenience that may be caused.

For though the major capital works done during the last holidays were necessary but I believe that if it was well thought out, that the one day on and the one day off, of the water

for almost 3 weeks could have been avoided. Luckily for my family that we have a tank and there's our neighbour's tank to occasionally supplement our supply.

Rating: 3/10

Bio Security

With a new office building the facilities are modern too.

Cons

There're 3 of them, the officer in charge, a field officer and a driver. There should also be service agreement for liaison and coordinated effort with the Immigration but more so with the Agriculture officers for assistance with more field work.

There seems to be very little visibility to stem out the fruit flies in Rotuma. For there are only a few traps here and there that will not catch all the fruit flies in the island and therefore a need to involve the SPC to help eradicate this pest should be sought.

Also there **were 2 frogs found at the Juju's feeder road and now there's a prevalent of wasps like hornets that build mud hives inside houses and trees.** Certainly if proper checks were made at the wharf of all cargo when a boat arrives every month than I believe these 2 pests could be prevented from getting ashore.

But luckily, most wells have been buried and Rotuma hasn't got rivers other than the 2 water falls at Itumuta, otherwise it'll be very difficult to eradicate the frogs.

Rating: 3/10

Land Transport Authority

Cons

For safety reasons, there's an urgent need for a LTA officer to be based in Rotuma. Other than a token appearance of once every 3 – 6 months for only a 2 hours visit from 8 – 10am before backing up to catch the same boat back to Suva so they'd not miss spending Christmas with their families.

Also knowingly that such boat visit was for a very limited time, that notice should be given to all the motor vehicle owners in Rotuma before hand. For this reason, there are many motor vehicles being driven around on the roads in Rotuma without any fitness checks done. It's a big risk for the paying and the travelling public in that there's a potential accident waiting to happen. Simply because of the conditions of some of the cars and trucks which wouldn't be allowed on the road any where in Fiji, until they are repaired and are road worthy.

Furthermore the LTA should be fair and consistent in its application of the law otherwise it's going to be very unfair and discriminatory to others that are affected. My car was being serviced and repaired for malicious damage and would have been ready a couple of days after the 2 LTA officers had left Rotuma, in the December trip.

Knowing that the previous LTA officials had granted our District Representative to the Rotuma Council a written provisional fitness approval to drive his truck on the road when it's repaired after it was out of service for 2 years. The vehicle is still being repaired and so I thought that it was permissible for such actions that I asked, that since my car is being repaired and since it's the festive season that my wife be allowed to drive it for ease of travel during the festive season.

This was rejected out right because of policy even when I told them what was previously done because of their infrequent visits. But still I was told that I'll have to wait for their next visit in 3 – 4 months time or pay for their fares and accommodations to return and do my fitness test and that of others.

That's ridiculous and very, very unfair since according to them it's the law. Then all is seen to be equal in the eyes of the law and that provisional approval issued to our District Representative should be revoked.

Rating: 1/10

Marine Board

Con

I do understand that safety is paramount when it comes to people and the huge associated costs involved for searches when people are lost at sea. But when such Acts are implemented, the Board got to ensure that their officers are fully trained on its application before they're sent out to avoid confusion as was done recently. Where we were told that one needs to have a license with safety equipment on board like a life jacket etc before the person can be allowed to use the canoe to fish within our lagoons. Such callous presentations, only hardens peoples hearts to do just the opposite when no one is looking. Thus all the stake holders including our District Representative need to sort this issue out promptly to resolve that confusion of their own making.

Also on the 9/2/13, I was at the wharf with many others watching MV Lady Sandy pulled anchor and already started reversing when suddenly *here I come late* surveyor arrived and waved his arms for the boat to come back. It then came forward before he waved his raised hand like *fascist* salute to stop which unfortunately was the only check he did before waving the boat okay to go. There were no proper checks of the boat including the safety equipment such as the life jackets and rafts on board etc done. Safety of the passengers should never be compromised for lateness and profit!

Also it's about time that the Board look at implementing safety training for all boat passengers similar to that done by the aeroplanes.

Then there's the issue of the Government franchise for Rotuma. The Board would also do well to ensure that Seaview Shipping and any future franchisee to Rotuma provide a yearly planner. These operators need to agree and abide on what they said on the planner as a way forward to monitor the delivery of services afforded to Rotuma and provide certainty for intending passengers. This will definitely alleviate the confusion and the unreliability of the boat services currently afforded to the people travelling to and from Rotuma. For no one would haphazardly operate a company without a planner otherwise there'd be constant chaos.

Initially I had 16 family members travelling to Rotuma for Christmas but because of uni exams and vocational school, the numbers dwindled down to nine. But since there were no seats available from 15/12 – 14/1/13, so on 14/11/12 I was told that there was a boat going to Rotuma around the weekend of 15/12/12 which coincided with the trip that left on the week end of 17/11/12. Thus I paid for 9 family members to travel to Rotuma which I believed to be on 15/12/12. Based on what I was told by the cashier, a Ms Susana I did not immediately check the date on the receipts which I later found out, was an open date. Therefore my lawyer's attempts to delay the boat by a Restraining Order from the Courts from 9/12/12 to 15/12/12 were not possible.

However I did receive a full refund from the company the very next working day but our 4 friends from New Zealand had to forfeit 20% of their fares for failing to catch the boat. Especially when it wasn't their fault but the company for changing the schedule to 9/12/12 from their earlier planned date.

This also happened to my family again when the boat changed its planned schedule and arrived in Rotuma on Sunday 13/1/13 to depart at 11am on 15/1/13 knowingly that there'd be no work at Oinafa on Sundays. Thus causing my family, to miss their prepaid hotel accommodations at the Tanoa Plaza in Suva, from 14/1/13 onwards but had to leave for the Warwick Hotel on the Coral Coast. Our attempts to liaise with Seaview Shipping for a letter to this effect in order for my family to lodge a claim with the Travel Insurer have failed and to no avail. Thus I will have to speak to our lawyer and most probably lodge a claim for recovery at the Small Claims Court in Suva.

Rating: 1/10

Henry Enasio