

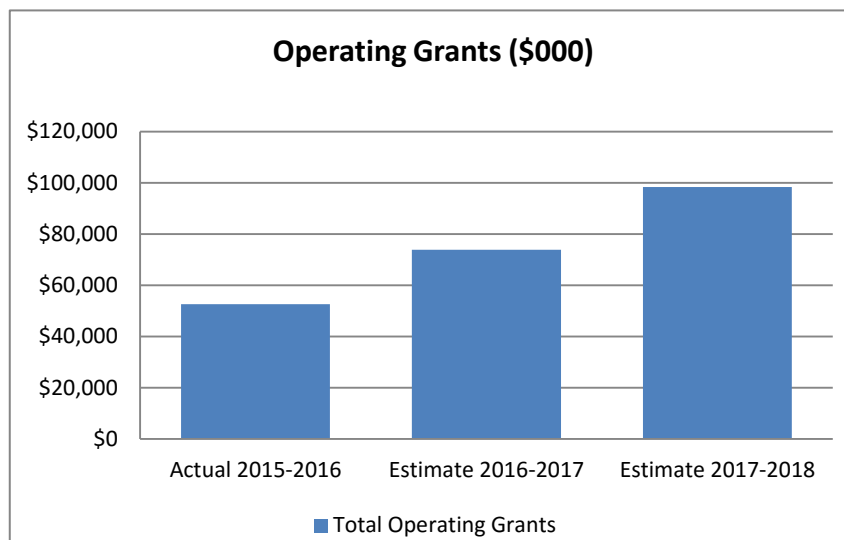


The Fijian Government Independent Bodies 2017-2018 Budget Highlights

Fiji's Independent Bodies operate independently of any other office and, along with Independent Commissions, make up the system of checks and balances that upholds the rule of law, ensures representative government and provides external oversight to secure and maintain transparent and accountable government.

These Independent Bodies are: the Parliament, the Judiciary, Office of the Auditor General (OAG), Fijian Elections Office (FEO) and Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP).

The budget for Independent Bodies in 2017-2018 comprises an operating grant of **\$98.4 million**.



The increase of **\$24.8 million** in the Independent Bodies 2017-2018 Budget is mainly attributed to:

- an increase in the operating grant for the FEO to prepare for the 2018 general elections; and
- an increase in the operating grant for the Judiciary to fund adjustments in salaries and wages and the upgrade of existing courts and the construction of new court houses around Fiji.

Office of the Auditor-General

The Office of the Auditor General is an independent office established under section 151 of the Fijian Constitution. The Constitution also requires that the Auditor General to audit and report to Parliament annually on the public accounts of the State, the control of public money and public property of the State and all transactions with or concerning the public money or public property of the State.

The budget of the Auditor-General in 2017-2018 comprises an operating grant of \$4.6 million. The increase of \$300,000 is due to adjustments to salaries and wages and other operational expenses.

Fijian Elections Office [FEO]

The FEO, along with the Electoral Commission, is responsible for the independent preparation work and conduct of national elections for Parliament every four years and any other election assigned under law.

The budget of the FEO in 2017-2018 comprises an operating grant of \$22.1 million. The increase of \$9.4 million is attributed to ongoing initiatives to prepare the country for the next general elections.

Ongoing Initiatives

- an increase in the operating grant of \$9.4 million is provided for the preparatory works for the 2018 Elections to fund the setup of 18 new area offices around the country, political party registration and voter registration, overseas voter registration, the national registration of voter display, a polling venue re-assessment exercise in January 2018, the printing of materials and programmes to raise community awareness.
- A further \$9.2 million is allocated under Head 50 as contingency funding if the general elections are called before 1st August, 2018.
- \$300,000 is also allocated for the conduct of Industrial Elections.

Judiciary

Section 96 of the Fijian Constitution vests the judicial authority of the State in Fiji's courts to resolve disputes and uphold the rule of law, subject only to the Constitution and the law.

Parliament must also ensure that the courts have adequate resources to perform its functions and exercise its powers properly.

The budget for the Judiciary in 2017-2018 comprises an operational grant of \$54.5 million.

New Initiatives

- \$3.2 million is allocated for incremental increases in salaries and wages.
- \$0.16 million is allocated to grant \$800 each to 200 Commissioners for Oaths to acquire materials essential to their work, including holy books, stamps and other items for swearing of oaths.
- \$0.22 million is allocated for an operational grant to upgrade sound and video recording equipment for the Courts to further enhance the accuracy of records of proceedings at the High Court, Court of Appeal and Supreme Court.
- \$0.14 million is allocated for the installation of cables to network all court registries to reduce communication costs and speed up operations.
- \$0.2 million is allocated to procure IT equipment to support the modernisation of the courts in Fiji.

Ongoing Initiatives

- \$1.05 million is allocated to upgrade holding cells at Government Buildings, upgrade the Lautoka multifunctional court and begin preparatory works to upgrade the Nadi Court House to accommodate the High Court.
- \$5.0 million is provided to start construction works on a new 2-storey court equipped with modern amenities and services for legal aid, the family court and counselling service in Nasinu.
- \$1.0 million is allocated to complete all civil works and begin construction on the new Nabouwalu Court.
- \$6.0 million is provided to start construction on the new Veiuto Court Complex – involving the upgrade of four administration buildings at the old parliament complex.
- \$1.2 million to complete all preparatory works on the new Lautoka High Court and new design scoping for the relocation of the Ba Magistrates Court.

- A further \$1.0 million is allocated under the Executive Residences programme in Head 50 for the upgrading of the official residence of the Chief Justice to address structural defects and prevent further deterioration to ensure continued use of this executive residential property.

Parliament

Section 46 of the Fijian Constitution establishes a democratically elected Parliament with “the authority and power to make laws for the State”. Parliament is the voice of the Fijian people, and it is responsible for ensuring representative government, openly debating relevant issues and providing oversight of government activities.

The budget for Parliament in 2017-2018 comprises an operating grant of \$11.0 million. There is an increase in this budget cycle of \$160,000, of which \$50,000 is specifically allocated for a job evaluation study for parliamentary officers.

Director of Public Prosecutions [DPP]

The Office of the DPP is an independent office established under the Constitution to institute and conduct criminal court proceedings in Fiji.

The budget of DPP in 2017-2018 comprises an operational grant of \$6.3 million. The increase of \$0.5 million in 2017-2018 is attributed to an increase in funding to improve the effectiveness of criminal prosecutions and increase to fund the hiring of five new legal officers, 22 temporary paralegal officers and three support staff for the police prosecutions service.