



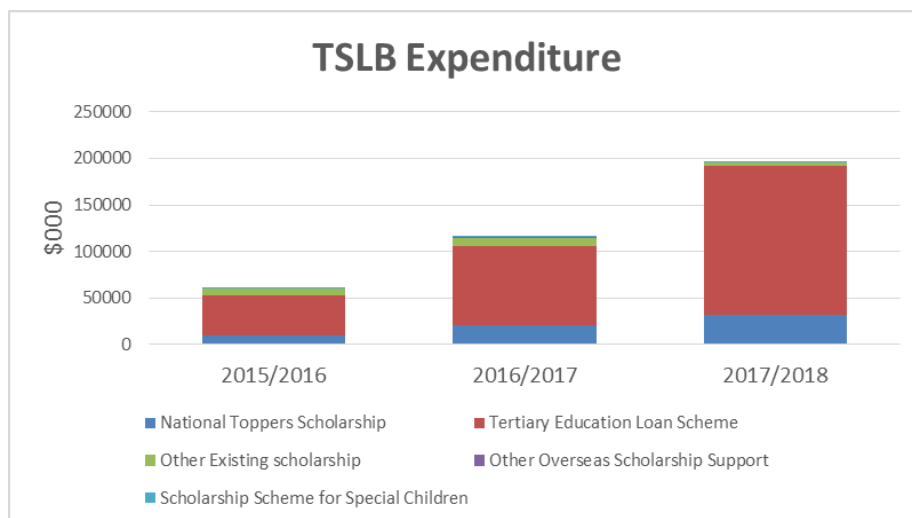
The Fijian Government Tertiary Education Loans Scheme 2017-2018 Budget Highlights

In line with Fijian Government's long-standing commitment to Fijian students and aggressive investment to improve access to high quality education, there is a dramatic increase in funding available to students who aspire to higher education in the 2017-2018 Budget.

This significant new investment in higher education seeks to boost the competitiveness of the Fijian workforce over the medium to long term by giving Fiji's young people greater opportunity to pursue graduate coursework in growing industries. More importantly, this new funding seeks to give Fiji's young people the chance to better their lives through education, without being limited by economic standing, gender, age or disability.

The new funding will be funnelled through the Tertiary Scholarship and Loans Board (TSLB) to fund scholarships and loans, including the Tertiary Education Loan Scheme (TELS), National Toppers Scholarship Scheme, Overseas Scholarship Programme, Scholarship Scheme for Children with Special Needs and other existing scholarship programmes.

A total of **\$196.4 million** is allocated in the 2017-2018 Budget to fund the various scholarships and loans administered by the TSLB. This represents an increase of **\$81.1 million** compared to the previous financial year.



Currently, scholarships and loans administered by the TSLB support 15,800 students in Fiji. The increase of \$80.6 million in the TSLB's 2017-2018 Budget will fund the expansion of these financial aid programmes to reach more students and restructure the programmes to grant recipients greater flexibility.

New initiatives

- An increase of **\$81.1 million** in new funding is allocated to the Tertiary Education Loan Scheme (TELS) to accommodate a number of new initiatives:
 - TELS will now allow students to repeat units and change their programme of study. Students will be allowed to repeat any unit one time. TELS will not cover the cost of repeating the unit a third time. There is no limit on the total number of units that can be repeated. The scheme will also now allow students to change their programme of study on one occasion, including for majors and minors.
 - \$18.3 million is allocated to introduce incidental and book allowances for TELS students at \$1,000 per annum (or at \$500 per semester or \$333 per trimester). This allowance was previously available only to recipients of the National Toppers Scholarship.
 - Allowances will be paid to TELS students during semester breaks so students enrolled in semester based courses will now receive an allowance of \$6,600 per annum or \$3,300 per semester compared to the current allowance of \$4,334 per annum or \$2,167 per semester. Students enrolled in courses that are trimester based will receive an allowance of \$7,125 per annum or \$2,375 per trimester compared to the current allowance of \$5,736 per annum or \$1,912 per trimester.
 - Students will be able to benefit from TELS for successive upgrades of their qualifications up to the first bachelor's degree, allowing students who successfully complete their certificate and diploma programmes to continue under TELS into a degree programme. There are currently 4,603 students currently enrolled in certificate and diploma courses at various higher education institutions under the various schemes.

- Students under TELS enrolled in technical colleges will now receive allowance payments.
- \$9.2 million is allocated for students who have passed Year 12 and therefore meet the minimum requirements for certain engineering courses at FNU to also access TELS.
- All allowances under TELS will be paid on pro-rata basis per the academic load, on recommendation of the Higher Education Institution. Students required to take 4 units per semester or trimester that take less than 4 units will receive a lower proportionate allowance. For example, a student taking 3 units will receive 75% of the allowance due.
- A one-off Start-Up Allowance of \$300 will be provided to first degree graduates to assist them prepare them for job interviews. Graduates with household income of less than \$30,000, are registered with National Employment Centre and have yet to find employment are eligible to receive this one-off allowance.

Ongoing Initiatives

- National Toppers Scholarship Scheme: offers full scholarships to the top 630 students graduating from high school in Fiji Seventh Form Examination to enrol in the fields prioritised under the scholarship. The fields of study correlate directly with Fiji's current and projected human resource needs (\$32.2 million).
- Other Existing Scholarships: funds students that are under old scholarship schemes, namely the Fijian Affairs Board, Multi-Ethnic Affairs, and Public Service Commission that were created prior to the TELS and Toppers Scholarship (\$3.7 million).
- Scholarship Scheme for Special Children: supports students with special needs who enrol in higher education institutions. Around 75 students have been assisted under the programme since January this year (\$200,000).

- Other Overseas Scholarship Support Scheme: funds supplementary allowances to Fijian Students studying overseas on donor funded and bilateral scholarships. Students will now receive an increased allowance of \$5,298 per annum from the current allowance of \$3,700 per annum (\$438,480).