

Campaign to combat overloading begins

THE use of portable weighbridges placed near the Naiborebore slip has launched the Fiji Road Authority (FRA) Land Transport Authority (LTA) and the Fiji Police Force joint taskforce anti-overloading campaign.

The joint taskforce has arisen out of a mutual concern about the risks presented by the ongoing problem of overloaded vehicles.

FRA CEO Mr. Neil Cook said, "Overloaded vehicles reduce the life of our roads and bridges significantly. But even worse than that, overloading significantly compromises safety. Excess loading reduces the effectiveness of brakes and suspension and this places the driver, other road



An LTA Officer uses the portable weighbridge that shows that this logging truck is loaded within the legal limits.

users and the general public at risk."

LTA officers began with an awareness campaign, randomly stopping and weighing commercial vehicles. Drivers of overloaded vehicles were asked to offload until they were within the weight limit.

"It is important to reinforce

the seriousness of overloading and educate our drivers to stay within the weight limit," said Mr Cook.

In the first three days of the campaign, 56% of the vehicles weighed were overloaded, with a peak on one day of 75%, figures that underline the very real need

to address the overloading problem.

By day seven, the percentage had dropped steadily to 43%, an improvement, but also an indication that more needs to be done to change the attitudes of offending drivers.

After the initial stages of the campaign, fines were put in place by LTA to help enforce the weight limit. As they are issued based on gross weight and individual axle weights, drivers need to be aware of the weight of their vehicles to ensure they abide by road laws.

"Overloading is costing everyone money and making our roads less safe. Let's work together to stop dangerous overloaded vehicles sharing the roads with our family cars and public service vehicles," said Mr Cook.

Sigatoka Valley benefits from new road



Access to education, markets and health facilities has been improved for the approximately 7,000 residents living along the Sigatoka Valley Road.

THE newly-constructed Sigatoka Valley Road has "significantly" improved access to school for the 200 pupils of the Loma Primary School according to Head Teacher, Mr Satendra Prasad.

"I have taught here for six years, so I can see a huge improvement. Attendance has improved because there is more regular transport to the school, and of course the vouchers for bus tickets provided by Government are a big help for the children," said Mr Prasad.

He said that before the road was built it was either a bumpy, dusty ride or a very

muddy one, depending on the weather.

"The children used to be affected by the dust flying into the classrooms every time a vehicle passed the school. We would clean in the morning and again in the afternoon because the dust would affect our computers and the photocopier," he said.

Children from Nadeva, Qereqere, Nevula, Loma, Bila, Bilalevu, Nasotava, Tavuto, Narata and as far as Draiba attend the school.

The approximately \$45 million project, which began in 2011, involved a full excavation resulting in construction of a 15

kilometre long, 10.3 metre wide road that received two full coats of seal.

As well as the 20 major culverts that were constructed beneath the road surface to carry water from one side to the other, 188 culverts were installed beneath residential entrances.

The all-weather road provides improved access to health care and markets for the 7,000 residents living along the road and into rural areas of the Nadroga and Navosa Provinces. These areas include the villages of Nakalavou, Naduri, Narewa, Narata and Nasovotua and the farming settlements of Barara, Qereqere and Bilalevu.

Not only will these places directly benefit from the new road, but those living in villages and settlements beyond the sealed road will also have shorter journeys.

Produce from the 'salad bowl' of Fiji, as the Sigatoka Valley is often called, will reach markets quicker, fresher, and without the customary covering of dust that was common in the past.

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CEO's Message

FIJI Roads Authority oversees the utilisation of funds allocated by Government for the construction and maintenance of our roads, bridges, jetties, streetlights and traffic signals. We carry out policy development and long term planning for the roading sector while 'contracting out' to the private sector most design and technical professional services as well as all physical works.

In this issue I would like to dwell more on the 'contracting out' or 'outsourcing' model and how effective it is proving to be in the Fiji context - even over as short a timeframe as eighteen months. Yes, it has been slightly less than eighteen months since Fiji Roads Authority went into full operation as the responsible agency overseeing assets with

a combined value of \$5.2 billion dollars.

One area that we see the outsourcing model delivering much greater value is in the accountability of all suppliers to deliver. Contractors submit tenders to deliver work to a required standard for an agreed price. FRA does not accept work that falls short of the required standard and where required the Contractor must rectify deficient work at his own cost. It is inevitable that from time to time things will not go according to plan. Through comprehensive contract documents it is clear what is required to be delivered. Consistent and diligent supervision of works ensures that defects are identified and acceptable remedial measures are agreed.

Some people have noticed an example of this in the remedial works being undertaken on sections of the new asphalt

surfacing in the Suva CBD.

99% of the project proceeded without incident however some isolated sections of the top surface suffered from a slightly unstable asphalt product that 'moved around' on top of the underlying pavement. To rectify this issue the contractor has thoroughly investigated the cause of the problem, modified the supply chain and manufacturing process to ensure it is not repeated, and is now removing and replacing the affected sections. Most importantly this rectification is the contractor's responsibility and the remedial work is carried out at the contractor's cost. This is the accountability that the outsourcing model delivers.

This sort of issue with supply chain and product quality is indicative of the challenges FRA and our suppliers have had to deal with in the past 18 months. Significant improvement is



evident and we have been buoyed by the commitment being shown by many of our suppliers to improve the quality of their products and services. Those that rise to meet our standards will thrive, those who do not will have to find other markets because FRA will not compromise the quality of products and services required to deliver Fiji an international standard roading network. By maintaining consistent standards we clearly define our expectations as a management organisation that is committed, transparent accountable and determined to deliver value for money for the people of Fiji.

Desire to learn drives career



FRA Contract Management Engineer & Tenders Board Secretary, Mr Ripon Baral.

THE avid interest that FRA Contract Management Engineer and Tenders Board Secretary Mr Ripon Baral, has in his work and the zest he shows for furthering his education are almost tangible. As part of his key responsibilities Mr Baral verifies claims submitted to FRA by the roading contractors via the consultants. This process includes ascertaining that the claims match against the

completed works carried out by the contractors and ensuring that all supporting documents have been supplied by the contractors.

With Supporting documents

are even more important if a contractor needs to justify an increase in the cost of the work carried out.

Mr Baral is also responsible for preparing the annual internal audit report for the Asia Development Bank (ADB) that is submitted to the Auditor General. The audits are for projects undertaken via loan funding provided by the ADB. In his role as the FRA Tender Secretary, he is responsible for the diligent management

of the tender processes for the Authority, including the public advertising of tenders, ensuring tender specifications details are supplied to bidders as per the requirements of the FRA Operations manual, uploading all documents in the electronic tenders website for the Authority, placing all tenders on the FRA website, receiving tenders in the manner specified, carrying out public openings and delivering the tenders received to the delegated tender evaluation teams.

Originally from Bangladesh, Mr Baral holds a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering and Diploma in Engineering from Kolkata, India. Seeing the value to his career of being computer literate, he completed the Computer Certificate Course in Microsoft at ET&T in Govt of Delhi, India by attending night

classes.

He has worked with multinational companies from India, Malaysia and Korea and credits the influence of an early mentor, Mr. KM Lee of Malaysia for his guidance, while working on a 124 kilometer six-lane national highway project (BOT) on NH2 in Kolkata, West Bengal from 2001 to 2004.

"I joined as a senior quantity surveyor. Mr Lee, who was both the contract manager and my manager, worked past midnight on this project. He taught me a lot that has been helpful in my work," said Mr Baral. And despite his demanding work load, Mr Baral continues to demonstrate the same enthusiasm he had in Calcutta. He is attending night classes and studying towards an MBA at the University of the South Pacific and hopes to graduate by next year.

From tracks to roads for rural development

ONE of Government's key objectives in rural development is to unlock the country's potential.

This translates into access to markets and the development of the agriculture sector, access to education for children, and access to employment opportunities for all rural dwellers.

To assist in the realisation of these goals, the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) has earmarked \$10 million in order to develop pilot tracks that have been cut that are barely



These before and after photographs of Baidamudamu Road on Kadavu show how overgrown some roads have become, and the difference that grading and resheeting makes.



Central Division. Funds are available to develop the Health Centre, so FRA is making sure that the roads are in a good reliable state so people can access health care.

accessible by vehicle.

The \$10 million will be divided equally for use in projects in all Divisions, looking at cutting new road, improving pilot roads that can be found all over Fiji.

For example, FRA is looking at one route in Vanua Levu where people need to travel five to six hours by bus

to get from one side of the island to the other. Improving a rural road through drainage and resheeting with good gravel would cut that time to under less than two hours, significantly reducing the cost of travel and encouraging people to become more mobile.

Another example is the Waivaka Health Centre in the

As well as working closely with the Division Commissioners and the Provincial Councils, the FRA team is consulting directly with rural communities and is engaged in site investigations to see what is needed and where an improved situation will make a huge difference to people's lives.

Tender processes clarified

WHEN it became apparent that local contractors are not used to the FRA tender processes and may have their tenders rejected because of shortcomings in their tender documentation FRA's management took action.

The Tendering for FRA Contracts Industry Workshop was convened to explain the various processes the Authority follows in the evaluation of tenders and to clarify what FRA expects of contractors in presenting their tender documents.

FRA uses different types of supplier selection methods to suit different circumstances. Some of these are complex, some simple, but none rely on price alone.

The four main selection processes are:

1. Lowest Price Conforming
2. Weighted Attributes
3. Price Quality Method
4. Supplier Panel or Framework

In all four processes, the Authority's aims are the same: fairness, transparency and consistency.

The workshop, a part of the ongoing FRA commitment to upskill and support local suppliers in the road contracting industry, is expected to result in future tenders that would allow FRA to choose the right contractor for each project.

The longer term outcome is expected to be consistent bidding standards as well as accurate information on the true capabilities within the industry.

Mohammed shares new knowledge



Knowledge transfer is an important component of the FRA commitment to a sustainable local roading industry.

MOHAMMED Khan's enthusiasm about the recently held Compaction Training Workshop is not only for the knowledge he gained for himself, but is also about what he can share with others.

Mr Khan, or Mohammed as he prefers to be called, is a Technical Assistant with roading sub-contractor Hot Spring Hire Service Ltd, who participated in the Compaction Training Workshop organised by Fulton Hogan Hiways JV and conducted by Mr Stuart Moulding of Civiltrain, a New Zealand based company.

"I got to learn something new and I am transferring this knowledge to my crew who are working on the road. We can practice what I learnt and make good roads in the future," said Mohammed.

Mohammed, who holds a Diploma in Civil Engineering from the Fiji National University, manages a crew

that operates a grader, a roller and a water cart.

"So definitely the Compaction Workshop has really helped me in understanding what is happening when we do a roller compaction. The roller vibrates and rolls but the actual compaction is from the weight of the tyres," said Mohammed.

He said that if a roller is used too often, "just rolling the roller and wasting fuel, it will crush the stones too small and this will reduce the strength and the life span of the finished road. Now we understand what we need to do to build better roads."

The compaction courses were held in Suva, Nadi and Savusavu. Not only did local employees of the contractor and sub-contractor companies working on Fiji's roads attend, but representatives from the Water Authority of Fiji also participated.

FRA offers career choices



Working together in the FRA team, FRA's Ms Shenal Kumar, (seated) Ms Marilyn Ram (centre) and Ms Litea Qoro (right).

NOT all careers at Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) or in the roading industry involve heavy machinery, safety equipment, or hot bitumen. Just ask three of the women employed by FRA at the Head Office in Nasese.

Administration Assistant, Shenal Kumar is usually

the first person we meet or talk to when visiting or phoning FRA as she is responsible for minding the front office and fielding all incoming calls. She also assists with correspondence and the customer care system, where she responds to complaints and queries from the public.

She started work with FRA over a year ago and says, "My constant challenges are multi-tasking and remaining calm around challenging people who call in to register a complaint about their road."

An Accountant by profession, Marilyn Ram joined FRA as the Accounts Payable Officer. In this role she supports a core function of the finance team, dealing with external parties to ensure that payments are done in a timely manner.

"I wish to do my post-graduate studies. Education does not end when you begin work. Systems, policies, procedures all keep changing. I want to keep on learning and progress further," she said.

Litea Qoro joined FRA

in late May this year as a Senior Administration Officer bringing with her 15 years of work experience in the telecommunication industry and considerable expertise in process mapping. Process mapping involves documenting exactly what tasks and processes each employee in a company performs, and representing this in a visual format in order to see where effectiveness or efficiency could be improved.

"I am excited to be able to use my skills in a different industry, but at the moment my greatest challenge is learning a whole new vocabulary associated with the maintenance and construction of roading networks," said Ms Qoro.

Supplier selection methods at FRA

IN this and the next three issues of **FIJI ROADS** we will outline each of the supplier selection methods employed by FRA in awarding tenders for projects.

Lowest Price Conforming

This method is usually restricted to simpler projects where the primary consideration is pricing. As long as the supplier can demonstrate they have the manpower and the equipment and can deliver the project, the tender bid with the lowest price will win the contract.

In this method, the price envelopes are opened first, after which the non-price envelope of the lowest tender is opened and the attributes are assessed for pass/fail. If they fail, the non-price envelope of the next lowest tender is opened.

FRA has to be confident that either all potential bidders are capable of doing the work to an acceptable standard, or that the pass/fail criteria are strong

enough to eliminate those who are not capable.

FRA will contact the contractor if it appears that information is missing by mistake or if there is a need to clarify information that appears to be at odds either with what is expected or what is known about the contractor.

Key points to remember are:

- Attributes and price are to be submitted in separate envelopes.
- FRA will never ask for a price only.
- All standard forms in the Request For Tender are to be completed.
- Evidence of financial viability, insurance and the ability to raise a performance bond may be required.

Taveuni improvements

"I have seen a big improvement in the last six months," said Taveuni pearl farmer, Mr Claude Prevost.

"Since March, I have seen constant road maintenance taking place on Taveuni and roads get graded regularly."

"I understand that it all takes time and money and investment. I also understand that you can't repair all the bridges or raise the



Regular grading contributes to improved road maintenance on Taveuni.

level of the road all in one day, it will take time.

"But I am result orientated. Before I had to drive at 20 kilometres an hour. Now I can drive at 50 kilometres. I have no problem if this standard is maintained."

USP Careers Expo



DESPITE the rain, students at the University of the South Pacific took advantage of the opportunity to investigate possible careers in the roading industry, where FRA Communications Officer Ms Onarina Umu (left) and MWH Global



Database Administrator, Mr Kameli Koroivukivuki (seated centre) and MWH Global Asset Management System Manager, Mr Conway Pene, (right) explained the variety of career options available in their respective organisations.

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