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# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **HUTCHINSON: FRA HAS DIVISIONAL PRESENCE AND BEST WAY TO GET HOLD OF FRA IS TO DIAL 5720 (TOLL FREE)**

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The Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) stands to correct recent commentary in the media around its lack of divisional presence. This contradicts the fact that the FRA has established divisional offices in Nadi, Labasa and Nausori since 2016.

FRA Chief Executive Officer John Hutchinson says the establishment of these offices brings the Authority's services closer to the communities in the Central, Western and Northern Divisions and that these offices were all open for service in mid-2016.

However, the procurement of construction and consultancy work is still being carried out by the FRA Procurement Team who operate out of the Suva Head Office.

It was recently highlighted in the media that road works in the Bua Province were contracted to companies from outside the province and that these actions were questionable. In response to these claims, Mr Hutchinson says that the FRA awards contracts to successful tenderers through an open, transparent and merit based procurement process designed to get the best value for money for the Fijian taxpayer's dollar. Companies have to first fulfill the necessary requirements in order to be considered. Mr Hutchinson says that if tenders were not awarded to Bua based businesses they either did not submit a bid, or were evaluated as not offering the best possible value for that particular tender. The FRA operates in a free market and expects the companies offering their services to do the same and compete on a level playing field.

He adds that tenders are not awarded on the contractor's geographical presence and that claims by some leaders that FRA needs to establish more offices in the outer rural depots on mainland Viti Levu and Vanua Levu is not something the authority is considering for the near future. This is simply because the administration cost of setting up, maintaining and operating such an establishment is costly and these funds are better utilized on infrastructure improvement projects.

Mr Hutchinson adds that for FRA's Capital Works Rural Roads Projects, the contractor establishes himself onsite and the work is supervised by a team of FRA engineers and project managers. However he adds that maintenance of rural roads is either periodic or reactive and is carried out under the FRA's road maintenance budget depending on the level of service the road is programmed to receive. Mr Hutchinson adds that the FRA has recently compared the service levels undertaken by its maintenance contractors to those previously undertaken by the former Public Works Department. In many cases the current maintenance contractors are providing a higher level of service than the PWD undertook. Where there were shortfalls, the FRA has reviewed these service levels and adjusted them where necessary. The feedback received from the respective Divisional Commissioners in response to this proactive response by the FRA has been very positive.

Mr Hutchinson says that whilst the branch offices are operational, the easiest, most cost effective way to contact the Fiji Roads Authority is to call them on 5720.

"This a toll free line, so callers are not charged for contacting us to raise road concerns. If they require other forms of assistance please by all means visit one of our branch offices to receive the assistance you need but call us first for advice so you do not have to waste a trip."

Alternatively customers are encouraged to log their concerns on our website [www.fijiroads.org](http://www.fijiroads.org)

The FRA acknowledges that Fijians are increasingly "tech savvy" and phones/ internet are increasingly the preferred form of communication. Nevertheless Mr Hutchinson says we must continue to cater for the traditional forms of communication, hence the opening of our Divisional offices to better serve our customers.

The Fiji Roads Authority has recently held two Stakeholder Consultation Forums in Lautoka and in Labasa and will be holding a third forum on Friday 26 May at the Novotel Lami Bay.

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