

**Speech by Professor Biman Prasad, Leader of NFP at the launch of the National Federation Party 2014
General Election Manifesto, 21 July, 2014, Khastriya Hall, Suva**

After 8 years of military rule on September 17 the people of Fiji will have the long denied opportunity to decide which political party should form our Government. In deciding how to cast your vote, I appeal to you to carefully consider the following: Which party puts the nation ahead of the self-interest of its leaders? Which party can be trusted to rebuild our democracy? Which Party has a solid economic plan to create stable and well-paying jobs? Which Party has a plan to reduce the price of food, medicine and transport? Which Party has a credible plan to help our country to avoid the pain and suffering of further coups?

I am deeply honoured to present the Manifesto of the National Federation Party to you today. This document helps you decide on these questions. I urge you to carefully read this.

Ladies and Gentlemen, **the 2014 Manifesto of the NFP is a different document.** Unlike the Fiji First Party and others, the NFP and I do not pretend that we know what is best for you and your families.

This manifesto is not written by spin doctors and hired professionals. My party has travelled the breadth and the width of the country; we have held hundreds of meetings, and have received hundreds of submissions on what you think is best for you and for our country.

This manifesto amplifies your voice. It responds to your concerns. It captures your aspirations. The days where leaders can turn up to your homes and villages and tell you what is best for you, your children or your parents are well and truly over.

More than amplifying your voice, the manifesto is a compact. It is a compact between you and the National Federation Party. It is a compact between our citizens and me personally. This manifesto presents

practical plans that we will bring into Government and above all it is a document you must use to hold the NFP and I accountable. I will ensure that you can use this Compact to ensure that all our MP's and officials use all their influence to bring the programs to fruition in the new parliament.

Beneath these carefully crafted feasible programs for Government, the manifesto is linked to our founding principles of good governance and respect for fundamental human rights. The NFP has stood by these principles for 50 years – not because we cannot change but because our core values of democracy, fairness, and equal human rights do not change with time. They withstand the test of time.

The NFP is not tainted by its support for coups or collusion with coup makers and while we reject the Constitution that has been foisted upon us, we accepted that the best way forward for our country at this time is to seek a mandate from the people and the NFP has decided to participate in the 2014 Elections in that spirit and as our track record shows we will bow to the will of the people as we have always done in the past. We are committed to our pledge to serve all our peoples through an accountable government. To do so we need to restore our democracy. We need to rebuild government institutions. We need to reignite the commitment of our civil servants so that they give their best to providing services and solutions to the problems our people face. It is only from this that we can then deliver a strong economy. From a strong economy we can begin to reduce the many hardships our people face. **This Manifesto - your Manifesto is a start of that journey.**

It is my firm belief that the people of Fiji will decisively vote for a change in this election. The status-quo of low growth, rising cost of living, high levels of unemployment, deteriorating health services and facilities, poor infrastructure, inconsistent economic policies and lack of good governance is unacceptable to the people. The exasperation of the people with the status-quo is understandable and they are in no mood to suffer any more.

I will not summarize the manifesto. It is there for you to read and absorb. In short, the NFP's manifesto responds to each of the areas in which Fijians are seeking a transformation.

Exactly what NFP will do for you is in this Manifesto. Briefly:

- Govern fairly for all Fijians
- Create more jobs, decent jobs, and increase productivity
- Immediately reduce VAT from 15% to 10% and reduce import duties on essential food items to reduce the cost of living for all families
- Provide not just fee free education but quality education that will include children with disabilities and more funding for scholarships for students from underprivileged families
- Recognition and funding for our Taukei as the first people of Fiji and their special place in our nation as the custodians of a unique culture, strong traditional values and their native land.
- Establish national guidelines for child protection, not just emergency *ad hoc* measures
- Increase funding for aged care and increase social pension
- Protect freedom of speech and support an open media.
- Promote just, fair and humane labour practices, first repealing the Essential National Industries (Employment) Decree and amending the Administration of Justice Decree to restore full collective bargaining rights and access to justice for workers and trade unions, including police and prison officers; and restore Public Service Log of Claims (LOC) award
- Review and establish national minimum wages and conditions including redundancies.
- Remove restrictions related to political party and electoral decrees.
- Introduce a national medical and life insurance scheme.
- Restore retirement age to 60 in the civil service.
- Institute a fully transparent system of all procurement of all goods and services by Government.
- Make timely assessments of government's financial performance and table Auditor General's Report.

In a nutshell, the

NFP will provide good governance, a transparent system free of corruption that will have sound fiscal policies that will build a strong economy to provide decent jobs for decent pay with good productivity, with special measures to protect and promote youth, and develop an environment that allows all people to pursue their aspirations with real prospects of success.

Trust Team NFP – this Manifesto is your guarantee of good government.

The NFP under my leadership will promote sound and not populist policies that will build a strong and stable economy, generate decent jobs for our young and develop an environment that allows all our people to pursue their aspirations and realize their dreams here in Fiji – not abroad.

We believe that our manifesto will lead to a credible and stable government after the election. We believe Fiji will attract significant funding, grants and investment from our development partners. We project that Fiji could attract an estimated billion dollars in grants and investment over the next four years. NFP's manifesto contains policies which will guarantee a sustained economic growth rate of more than 5 percent per annum which will translate into more productive and decent jobs and thereby reducing the number of people living below the poverty line. We will put Fiji back on the path of renewed prosperity.

What the NFP offers is a team you can trust: a team that knows what it will take to deliver this manifesto; a team that knows what it takes to succeed.

I am leading a team that represents all walks of national life: people with backgrounds in farming, in civil services, in law, in commerce, in education and more. My team includes a medical doctor, gender specialists, economists, a seasoned airline pilot & aviation entrepreneur, ecologists, peace specialists, lawyers, education specialists, a tourism entrepreneur, youth advocates, religious leaders, writers, social workers and experienced politicians. **My team has the people and the skills that are needed to get our country moving again.** My team knows what it will take to kick start our economy. My team knows the hard work that lies ahead.

Team NFP represents our great country. It includes men and women; it has leaders from our villages, from the distant islands and from our towns and cities. They hold different faiths and beliefs. But what unites them all is a shared respect for the important values and principles of democracy; of giving their best to realize the vision that this manifesto outlines and their personal sacrifice to put Fiji's interest by answering the call to serve, rebuild and restore our country.

This dynamic, multiracial, multi-faith team is united in a firm belief that 'we can and we will make it work'. TRUST us. We will deliver. This country will be great once again. We will once again shine light to the world. Pope John Paul said of us many years ago: 'Fiji the way the world should be'. We will get there once again.

To the media assembled here, I once again remind you of your sacred duty. Please give the NFP a fair go in order to project our manifesto nationally. Please give all parties a fair space to project their manifestos as well. Help our voters to make informed choices because in restoring our democracy, much rides on you.

I also continue to call for a national debate of leaders on their respective manifestos. This is absolutely necessary for voters to be able to decide in an open, transparent and accountable way to choose their next government. I especially call upon the Bainimarama government to stop the intimidation of the media organisations and journalists. If this government continues to harp on about the developments that have occurred in this country for the last 7 years, then they have nothing to fear except the truth. They must let go of their controls on the election process. They should let the Electoral Commission do its work independently. The Election Commission has become a compliant, ineffective body which stands by and accepts the decision by the government. In fact they seem to have gone into hiding.

Today, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am also very pleased to announce our party spokespersons for the different areas. This will allow the party to articulate its policies in more detail to the people of Fiji and again I would implore upon the media to talk to our spokespersons on specific areas that our manifesto addresses. As a leader of the Party I will take responsibility for national planning and national re-conciliation.

	Key Areas	<u>Party Spokespersons</u>
1.	Law, Justice, Home and Indigenous Affairs	Roko Tupou Draunidalo
2.	Education, Science & Technology	Adi Dr. Eci Kikau Nabalarua
3.	Health	Dr. B.P. Ram
4.	Land, Energy and Mineral Resources	Ms Makereta Waqavonono
5.	Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Mr. Prem Singh
6.	Housing, Urban development & Squatter Settlements	Mr. Parmod Chand
7.	Women and Development	Ms Fay Volatabu
8.	Employment, Industrial Relations and Productivity	Mr. Attar Singh
9.	Foreign Affairs	Mr. D.S. Naidu
10.	Economy, Finance and Trade	Dr. Sunil Kumar
11.	Industry, Tourism and Public Enterprises	Mr. Pramod Rae

12.	Sugar Industry	Mr. Jaganath Sami
13.	Transport, Civil Aviation and National Infrastructure	Mr. Eroni Maopa
14.	Environment and Natural Resources Management	Mr. Jone Vakalalabure
15.	Information, Communications and Media	Ms. Seini Nabou
16.	Social Welfare, Culture, Youth and Sports	Mr. Sada Sivan Naicker

Ladies and Gentlemen, Thank you and god bless this great country of ours.

Professor Biman Prasad

Suva, 21 July 2014