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**Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, Public Service, Peoples Charter for Change and Progress, Information, iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Lands and Mineral Resources**

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**SPEECH AT THE COMMISSIONING OF REPLACEMENT OF NEW CARDIAC LAB MACHINE AND NEW OPERATING THEATRE**

**CWM Hospital Tues. 12 Aug 2014**

**SUVA 1500 Hours**

* **The Minister for Health;**
* **The Acting Indian High Commissioner to Fiji,**

**Mr Vikrant Rattan;**

* **Distinguished Guests,**
* **Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Bula Vinaka and a very good afternoon to you all.

I’m always delighted to be present for the launch of any initiative that improves the quality of our health system and today is no exception.

Because this is yet another milestone in my Government’s program to strengthen the delivery of health services to the Fijian people.

I’m especially pleased to launch this significant upgrade to cardiac services at the CWM – our principal hospital and the heart of the system itself.

From now on, the standard of treatment and care that is available to any Fijian with a heart condition has just got dramatically better. So this is a day for both pride and celebration, as well as being the perfect opportunity to take the pulse of our health system as a whole.

I passionately believe that every Fijian deserves the best possible health care that a nation of our size and means can provide. This is reflected in the new jobs we have created to upgrade the system - 696 new Doctors, 1,510 new Nurses and recently, another 553 ancillary workers in our hospitals.

We’ve also increased the number of medical professionals being trained in Fiji and overseas. And all over the country, we have set up new health care clinics, with an emphasis on delivering services to Fijians in remote rural and maritime communities.

No other government has ever made the investment that we have made and are still making to deliver a better standard of health care in Fiji. And we are doing so committed - at every level - to being more creative in employing the resources we have; constantly striving to do more with less; forging as many partnerships as we can both locally and overseas; and instilling in every health worker the notion of service above all else.

As I keep saying, my Government’s over-arching principle is very simple: We deliver. We serve. We don’t make empty promises. If we see a need, we do everything we can to meet it. And that is the standard that we have set right across our Ministries as we strive to deliver to the Fijian people the things they need to improve their lives and those of their families.

When ordinary people get sick, that is when they most need our assistance. So that is when our obligation to them is at its highest. When there is no excuse not to deliver, not to serve.

Working together, we are putting behind us the days in which some of our health workers displayed an attitude of casual indifference to ordinary Fijians in their hour of need. We have been determined to put the *“care”* back into health care. And that means working with the public health employees to develop a new spirit in our hospitals and clinics – of pride in our mission and of always putting the patient first.

My Government has spent the past eight years doing as much as we can to bridge the gaps in our system brought about by previous years of neglect.

We have played this catch-up game very well and can demonstrate a solid record of achievement. We still have some way to go and I am the first to admit that Fiji shares many of the challenges faced by even the most advanced countries in meeting the health care demands of a population that is growing and also living longer.

During this election campaign, we keep hearing from opposition politicians that more needs to be done. I agree. But talk is cheap. Genuine achievement comes from identifying a problem and using teamwork to fix it. Or seeing an opportunity and seizing it. And that is what my Government has done, is doing and will continue to do if the Fijian people put their trust in us to continue our reform program when they cast their votes on 17 September.

Forget about the promises. Look at the record. Two weeks ago, we celebrated the opening of the new 20-bed Navua Hospital – which is now providing an unprecedented level of health care to the river town and the provinces of Serua and Namosi.

Last week, we performed the groundbreaking ceremony for the new 60-bed hospital in Ba, which will dramatically raise the standards available to tens of thousands of people in the West. And in the same week, we started work to upgrade the Lautoka Hospital, where we are building a new Emergency Department and new operating theatres.

Today, we embark on yet another major upgrade in our capital – at the famous hospital where so many of us were born and which for 90 years has served the people of Suva and the people of Fiji.

The CWM Hospital currently performs about 6,000 of the 10,000 surgical operations undertaken in Fiji every year. But the quality of those procedures is about to be taken to another level with this new state-of-the-art facility, that is among the most advanced ever built in Fiji.

We now have the ability to perform the most complicated surgical procedures – and especially heart surgery – here in Suva rather than sending patients overseas. CWM is about to become a regional hub in which highly trained surgeons and physicians both transform and save the lives of hundreds of Pacific islanders. And Fiji is taking a great leap forward towards meeting one of the Government’s key objectives – which is to provide us with the same level of specialist care as the rest of the world.

We already have the highest number of undergraduate and post-graduate medical trainees in Fiji’s history learning the skills they need to deliver better outcome for our people. And equally important, we are giving them the tools they need to do their jobs to the best of their ability, in this case, some of the best tools in the world.

As I mentioned before, our international partnerships are a vital part of our health care program. Governments, professional medical organisations and civil society groups all give generously to help us assist ordinary Fijians and for that, we are extremely grateful.

Today, I especially thank the Government of India for its donation of $200,000 towards this project. I also want to single out Dr Vijay Kapadia, formerly of Toorak in Suva and now a cardiologist in Brisbane, Australia, who together with his Rotary Club colleagues, has worked tirelessly to deliver quality heart care to our people.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is a proud day for the CWM, for my Government and for everyone involved with this project. It is a proud day for Fiji.

As I have great pleasure in opening this facility where so many individual hearts will be mended, I want to say this: We are a big hearted nation. We are a big hearted people. And I passionately believe that the heart of our nation has never beaten more strongly.

Together, we are united and focused on building a better future for every Fijian, not just for some. We are rejecting the voices of division, the echoes of our turbulent past. We have our eyes set on finally fulfilling our destiny. And I am convinced as the Prime Minister OF all Fijians, FOR all Fijians, that even greater days lie ahead. Because there is room for everyone in the new Fiji. No-one will be left behind. And that’s my solemn promise as I seek your trust and support to lead us forward.

May God bless us in our quest to become a better nation, a nation of equality, fairness and justice for all. May God Bless Fiji.

Vinaka vakalevu, Thank you.

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