

PSC CIRCULAR

Public Service Commission, Berkley Crescent, P. O. Box 2211
Government Buildings, Suva. Telephone 3-314-588

PSC Circular No. 20/2007

To: Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments **File:** 29/582

Subject: CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR IMPENDING STRIKE **Date:** 4th July 2007
BY PUBLIC SERVICE UNIONS

- 1.0 Confronted with strong economic imperatives and the need to stabilise its fiscal position, the Interim Government considered a number of economic and fiscal measures, including cost reductions that needed to be implemented with some urgency. The Public Service Commission commenced dialogue with the Public Service Unions in February 2007 on a number of the proposed cost cutting measures including the pay reduction, the deferment of the Partnership Agreement and the revision of the retirement age. Talks were progressing but at a somewhat slow pace with the Unions making counter offers.
- 2.0 Since then the Public Service Unions have proceeded to obtain strike mandates from their members. The strike mandates by the Unions are over their grievances relating to three (3) main issues, namely, the 5% pay cut, lowering of the retirement age and the cancellation of the Partnership Agreement. The Fiji Public Service Association and the Fiji Nursing Association have filed a 28 days strike notice which would expire at midnight on 19/07/07 and 24/07/07, respectively, when the Associations will pull out their members on strike. It is expected that the other Unions, namely the Fijian Teachers Association, the Viti National Union of Taukei Workers and the Public Employees Union would be filing their strike notice soon.
- 3.0 The actions by all the parties involved including the Commission, the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Tourism and Environment and the Unions have so far, been in compliance with the requirements of the Trade Unions Act Cap 96 and the Trade Disputes Act Cap 97. The Commission strongly emphasise the continued adherence to the laws. The Commission also stresses the equally important need for government employees to take heed of the provisions under the Public Order Act, relating to unlawful organizing or convening of meetings and processions in a public place, unlawful assembly, etc and the consequences of any actions likely to contravene the Act.

- 4.0 The Public Service Commission considers it necessary to remind addressees of the importance to undertake an immediate review of the Contingency Plan in your Ministries/Departments and to update this as and where necessary. A copy of the Plan is to be immediately forwarded to the Commission, if not already done.
- 5.0 The Contingency Plan ensures that there is minimum disruption to the services provided by Ministries/Departments and these are maintained at a reasonable level during times of crisis. With the threat of industrial action by the Public Service Unions, Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments are asked to have ready their Contingency Plans and to be prepared to implement these at short notice.
- 6.0 The Contingency Plan for the Public Service will involve the actions as explained below:-
- (i) A National Coordinating Committee or Task Force has been established, to look into and monitor closely the strike threats made by the public service unions and the implementation of contingency plans of Ministries/Departments.
 - (ii) Ministries/Departments are to identify key personnel in each division/section/station to form a Task Force which will ensure continuity of work particularly inessential services.
 - (iii) During the protest/stoppage period, Permanent Secretaries are expected to closely monitor staffing and security situation of Government facilities and infrastructures and regularly brief PSC. Temporary staff re-deployment/ engagement should be undertaken to ease any shortages or fill in gaps caused by striking employees.
 - (iv) The Permanent Secretaries will also be required to provide regular status report to the Commission and the National Coordinating Committee of the situation regarding the operations and security level in their Ministries/Departments.
 - (v) Attendance and staff movements are to be closely monitored, especially in the essential services. Daily head counts are to be carried out on staff attendance with list prepared showing names, designation, EDP/FNPF number and Division/Section and stations.
 - (vi) All leave for the said period should be deferred or cancelled until after the protest/stoppage is over.
 - (vii) A list of officers participating in the protest/stoppage is to be drawn up and a special register opened in each Ministry/Department by Section/Division/Station during the protest/stoppage period.
 - (viii) Those Departments under flex-time shall suspend flexitime and revert to regimented time as per GO301 and PSC Circular No: 02 of 1982 during the strike period. However the lunch hour flexitime

arrangements shall continue, but with security level increased and visitors to Ministries/Departments closely monitored with their names registered at the front desk.

- (ix) Those government employees involved in the strike action shall have their pay suspended and the number of days they are on strike deducted appropriately.
- (x) Your Ministry/Department's Contingency Plan must harmonize with the Contingency Plan for the Service as explained above.

7.0 CLARIFICATION:

- 7.1 Any clarification required may be sought and obtained from Mrs. Losana Ravuso, Principal Employee Relations Advisor, Employee Relations Division, Public Service Commission, on telephone 3314588 ext. 218 or email: lravuso@psc.gov.fj



Tom Lee

for Permanent Secretary for the Public Service, Public Enterprises
and Public Sector Reform