



2022 Fiji-Australia and Australia-Fiji Business Joint Forum: Vuvale - The New Paradigm

INTERCONTINENTAL FIJI GOLF RESORT & SPA, NATADOLA, FIJI | 1- 3 September 2022

MEDIA RELEASE

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Joint Forum's spirit of *Vuvale* crucial to business recovery and growth in Fiji and Australia

After a hiatus of two years due to the global pandemic, premiere business event the 26th Fiji Australia Business Council (FABC) and Australia Fiji Business Council (AFBC) Joint Business Forum gathered important private sector participants, enablers of business growth and members of the business communities from Fiji and Australia at the Intercontinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa over the last three days.

“We are pleased that we reached more than the anticipated number of delegates that we expected for this premier event annually organised and co-hosted by FABC and our sister council, AFBC. We welcomed over 150 delegates and speakers in Natadola this week,” states outgoing FABC President, Mr. Warwick Pleass.

This bilateral event is steeped in history and it has been bringing members of the private sector and government representatives together for over two and a half decades without pause, until COVID happened. The delegates, speakers and organisers expressed a deep sense of appreciation upon finally having a face to face event after two very long and challenging years.

Fifteen businesses and organisations set up an exhibition of their varied products and services during the Welcome Reception, including shipping agencies, software companies, telcos, banks, renewable energy startups, tourism operators, and retail businesses. Even two players of the Fijian Drua team showed up with their new *i-voce*!

Enquiries about the event can be directed to our event managers at The Greenhouse Studio:

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Vuvale - The New Paradigm, was the theme of this year's Forum, and right from the onset, there was an excited hum within the round tables of prominent CEOs, business owners, managers, directors and government officials. This unmistakable hum established a positive and collaborative tone throughout the Forum which began with Australia's Assistant Minister for Trade, Senator The Hon. Tim Ayres' message as well as Australian High Commission's new Chargé d'affaires, Mr. John Williams; then officiated by Fiji's Minister of Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport, The Hon. Faiyaz Siddiq Koya; and finally culminated with Fiji's Attorney-General and Minister of Economy, Civil Service, Communications, Housing and Community Development, The Hon. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum's keynote today.

Distinguished experts from both governments, the private sector, and the development sector, across a multitude of fields were speakers in the full-packed Forum program. From the Reserve Bank of Fiji's Governor, Chief Executive Officers of banks and funds as well as Senior Economist's excellent presentations and analysis of global trends that impact Australia and Fiji; to sessions led by accomplished speakers looking at a whole gamut of possibilities in green investing, and business opportunities in bilateral trade in the BPO, sports, manufacturing, agriculture, energy, medical tourism, education, health and technology sectors.

The Forum dissected the challenges of doing business in Fiji as well as discussed the new patterns of operations and a different kind of thinking required in business post-COVID. One sentiment came out strongly in the discussions, and that is Fiji's Vuvale partnership with Australia has been critical to Fiji's recovery. The statistics presented in the Forum showed that Fiji was the fifth worst economy during the pandemic, and yet today we are the third fastest growing economy. The outlook is positive as the business communities from both countries studied innovative approaches and solutions that will strengthen Fiji's position back to its trajectory of becoming a powerhouse in the region.

AFBC President, Allison Haworth West remarks, "The Forum has allowed us to reconnect and strengthen our existing business linkages, as well as create new pathways for future partnerships and collaborations between our two countries. I am re-energised and thrilled to be inviting everyone to Australia in 2023 when AFBC hosts the next Forum to see how far we have come after our fruitful discussions this week."

At the close of the Forum, the newly-elected FABC President, Ms. Vera Chute says "FABC intends to find more creative ways of working with you all not only to fulfill our mission, but also address issues raised in our Forum, become enablers of business change, increase our council membership, and further grow the bilateral partnership between our two countries."

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FABC and AFBC thank all the generous sponsors and partners who supported the Joint Business Forum; Westpac, Digicel, Value City, Swire Shipping, VaiWai, and Comfort Home Furnishing; Media partners, The Fiji Times, and FBC.

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About Fiji Australia Business Council (FABC):

FABC promotes friendship, goodwill, and understanding between the business communities of Fiji and Australia to encourage trade, investment, tourism, technical and economic cooperation. The Fiji Australia Business Council is a dynamic organisation growing from strength to strength and is proud to celebrate 36 years in 2022.

For more information visit fabc.com.fj

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About Australia Fiji Business Council (AFBC):

The Australia Fiji Business Council, with its counterpart organisation in Fiji the Fiji Australia Business Council, was established in 1986 with the aim of providing a framework within which the private sector can communicate with the Australian and Fiji Islands governments at the highest political and policy advising levels with a view to finding solutions to trade and investments issues involving the two countries.

For more information visit afbc.org.au

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