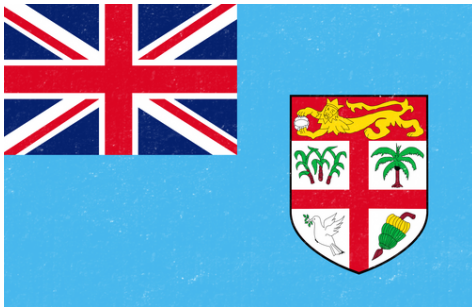


# Delegation Visit to Fiji & New Zealand

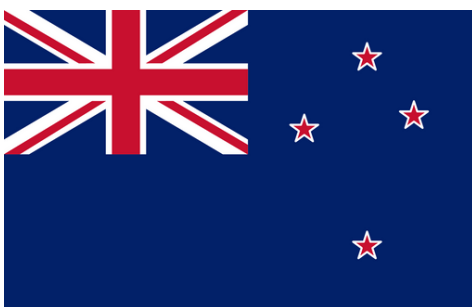
## REPORT SUMMARY

4-9 June 2023



### PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

In June 2023, a CPA UK delegation of four UK Parliamentarians travelled to Fiji and New Zealand (also referred to in Māori as 'Aotearoa') for bilateral engagements with their respective parliaments and civil society.



The visit marked the first outward CPA UK delegation to travel to the Pacific region since the COVID-19 pandemic. It came at a critical juncture in both Fiji and New Zealand politics, with Fiji having undergone a recent change of government following the December 2022 Elections, and New Zealand on the threshold of their own general election in October 2023.

### LIST OF DELEGATES

#### Members:

- The Rt Hon. Dame Maria Miller MP (Head of Delegation)
- Ian Murray MP
- The Rt Hon. the Baroness Taylor of Bolton
- The Rt Hon. Craig Whittaker MP

#### CPA UK:

- Victoria Bower, Head of International Partnerships
- Josh Drake, Asia-Pacific Regional Programme Manager

The delegation considered potential future partnerships with organisations these countries and the wider region, with special attention being given to the subject of ending violence against women and girls.

The programme consisted of two days in Fiji, and three days in New Zealand and . was organised with the support of the local CPA branches, and the British High Commissions in Suva and Wellington.

### PARTNERS



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# Delegation Visit to Fiji and New Zealand

## FULL REPORT

### COUNTRY PROFILES

#### Fiji

Population: 926,200

Capital: Suva

Head of Government: Sitiveni Rabuka

Head of State: Ratu Wiliame Katonivere

Members of Parliament: 55

Gender Balance: 60 Female,  
60 Male

#### New Zealand

Population: 4.94 million

Capital: Wellington

Joined Commonwealth: 1949

Head of Government: Chris Hipkins

Head of State: King Charles III (Governor General: Cindy Kiro)

Members of Parliament: 120

Gender Balance: 5 Female,  
50 Male



The CPA UK Delegation in the chamber of the Parliament of Fiji

### Women in Parliament & Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls

Women's representation in parliament was a point of discussion throughout the programme. The Parliament of Fiji has 55 members, only five of which are female. This gender imbalance extends beyond Parliament to other institutions in Fijian politics, most notably the Great Council of Chiefs. Only one woman currently sits on this body, primarily due to the hereditary succession rules governing chiefdoms, which give priority to male heirs. An added dimension to this issue in Fiji is the lack of women from the minority Indo-Fijian community, with only one female member from the government side originating from this background.

In Fiji stakeholders shared that a factor driving this underrepresentation of women is the high level of social media abuse directed against female candidates standing for election. **Male politicians were cited as having a key role to play in achieving a more gender balanced parliament, by supporting prospective female candidates.** It was notable that multiple female Fijian parliamentarians cited positive examples of this support from male colleagues in their own journeys to parliament.

The programme also considered challenges faced by women in wider society, most notably violence against women and girls (VAWG). Rates of VAWG in Pacific Island countries are among the highest in the world, standing at about double the global average, according to UN Women.

Actions are being taken to address this at the local and regional level, such as those taken by the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women. Initiatives advanced through this international body of non-governmental organisations have included a campaign for a 'Family Protection Bill' across the fifteen Pacific countries in which the network operates. Variations of this legislation are being promoted to adapt to the needs of each jurisdiction, with each version underpinned by the shared goal of eliminating of VAWG across Pacific Island states.

However, NGOs working to address VAWG in Fiji also underlined the need for robust legislation to be accompanied by effective application of the law, suggesting that deeper societal issues, such as certain cultural and religious views, have often made governments reluctant to involve themselves in enforcement efforts.

In New Zealand similar conversations around the role of entrenched societal prejudices are taking place, prompted in part by the ongoing issue of low prosecution rates in VAWG cases. One measure under active consideration is the removal of jury trial for these offences, due to the challenge of providing training to juries on the biases they may hold.



The CPA UK Delegation with leading CPA members in the New Zealand Parliament

## CPA UK IN THE REGION

### **UK-New Zealand Forum October 2021 to June 2022**

CPA UK held a series of virtual bilateral meetings between UK and New Zealand Parliamentarians. This forum considered several topics of mutual interest to both legislatures, including Trade & Transparency in Supply Chains, Climate Challenges, and Culture, Inclusion, and Sport.

### **Asia-Pacific Women's Roundtable**

**12 December 2022**

CPA UK hosted a virtual roundtable with women parliamentarians from the UK and across the Asia Pacific region in which members explored their roles as change makers, and considered how to manage the challenges they face as female parliamentarians.

### **Asia-Pacific Climate Forum 15-16 March 2021**

Ahead of COP 26 in Glasgow, CPA UK delivered a virtual forum on climate issues for parliaments in the Asia-Pacific region. This considered effective oversight and scrutiny of climate policies, whilst also giving delegates an opportunity to network and exchange ideas with key stakeholders in this field.

## Political Change

The programme coincided with a period of significant flux in Fijian politics. The December 2022 Elections resulted in power changing hands for the first time since the 2006 coup d'état, with the FijiFirst majority government of Frank Bainimarama giving way to a three-party coalition led by Sitiveni Rabuka. Bainimarama subsequently criticised President Ratu Wiliame Katonivere for facilitating this transfer of power, and called on the military to intervene against the new government. This resulted in his suspension from parliament, and his standing down as an MP shortly thereafter. Bainimarama is now charged with abuse of office by stopping a police investigation whilst he was Prime Minister.

The Rabuka government has advocated a reform agenda that includes greater openness and transparency in public life, as well as reconciliation with the Indo-Fijian minority, who have been subjected to oppression under previous governments.

A variety of stakeholders from Fijian civil society expressed hope that the new government would bring about positive change in their respective fields. Fijian members stressed that it would take time for their programme for government to yield results, and that good communication with the public was necessary to manage expectations of instant change.

They also **emphasised the need to make efficient use of resources through targeted, evidence-based interventions on longstanding issues such as poverty**, as opposed to distributing money among the policy without a clear rationale, as they felt there had been the tendency to do under previous governments.



The CPA UK Delegation with the Foreign Affairs, Defence & Trade Committee of the New Zealand Parliament

At the time of the delegation's visit, Fijian politics had been further complicated by the suspension of 24 members of the FijiFirst Party due to the failure to provide up to date financial statements to the relevant authorities. As a result, the delegation was only able to meet with government members during their visit.

This suspension presented a serious challenge to delivery of effective scrutiny, with all remaining members representing one of the three governing parties, and committees often having to co-opt members to achieve quorum to compensate for the absence of the opposition.

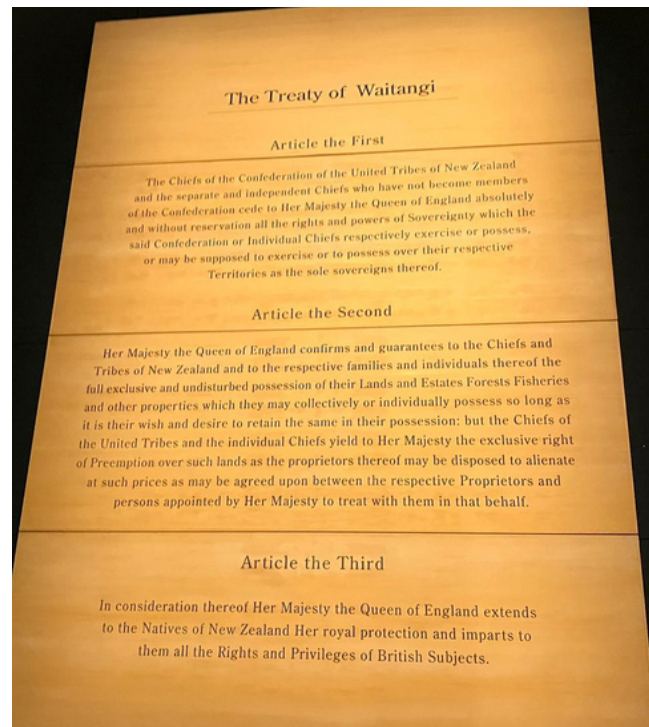
On the 10th June, the Acting Registrar of Political Parties confirmed that FijiFirst was now in compliance with financial requirements, and the suspension of all 24 members was lifted. However, the court case against Bainimarama remains ongoing, and the political situation in Fiji remains volatile.

The Parliament of Fiji also faces the added challenge of adapting to an influx of new members following the 2022 Election, which saw a large number of first time members elected. This large turnover has resulted on newer members taking on prominent positions in the parliament, including as Ministers and Committee Chairs.

New Zealand stands on the threshold of significant political change of it's own. The 2020 Election produced a Labour majority, an unusual outcome in New Zealand's electoral system of mixed member proportional representation. The forthcoming election in October 2023 is expected to be far closer, with the most likely outcome being a hung parliament that will ultimately produce a coalition government led either by Labour, or the opposition National Party.

Preparations for the post-election induction of new members are well under way in the Parliament of New Zealand. This process will involve not only all newly elected members, but also those unsuccessful candidates on party electoral lists who came closest to being elected, as these individuals will be required to fill any vacancies that arise during the next parliament. Members families will also be invited to activities that consider how to deal with the scrutiny and pressures that come with having a serving member of parliament in their family.

The induction process is planned to take place in the period when negotiations to form the next government are ongoing. Based off past elections, it is expected this process will last approximately one month.



The text of the Treaty of Waitangi on display in the Te Papa Museum

## Maori Influence in Aotearoa

The delegation began the New Zealand leg of the programme with a visit to 'Te Papa', New Zealand's National Museum. This gave a valuable insight into the influence of Maori groups in shaping New Zealand's past, present and future.

In 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi effectively annexed Aotearoa to the British Empire, with the indigenous Maori tribes being brought under crown protection in exchange. However, it has subsequently been established that the British understanding of the treaty differed from that of the Maori, who did not believe themselves to be ceding sovereignty to the empire.

This injustice is a driving factor behind the ongoing reconciliation process with the Maori. Since 1975, Maori tribes and kinship groups known as 'Iwis' have sought recognition and compensation for violations of the treaty under the Waitangi Tribunal.

**There are presently 35 Iwi's in New Zealand, many of which have accumulated over \$1 Billion NZD worth of assets through this process, and now wield substantial economic influence as a result.** Much of this money has been reinvested into community groups and organisations whose work particularly benefit Maori communities. The delegation viewed several of these during their visit to the Mana electorate of Barbara Edmonds MP, including those who work with young people by providing health services, developing life skills, and supporting the local LGBTQIA+ or 'Rainbow' community.

Maori voices are also promoted at the political level through the existence of seven electorates in the House of Representatives. These are reserved for Maori voters only, who must decide whether to cast their votes in these or the general electorates at least six months in advance of an election.



The CPA UK Delegation visiting Partners Porirua, a charity working with young people in the Mana Electorate

Resistance to the reconciliation process exists from a variety of stakeholders in New Zealand society. Although most Iwis are now covered by a treaty settlement, some have refused these on the grounds that the settlements offered do not fully take into account their grievances against the crown. This includes the Ngapuhi, the largest of the Maori tribes, whose settlement negotiations are ongoing.

Simultaneously, there has been some pushback by those who disagree with the granting of special privileges to Maori communities. This includes ACT, the third largest party in the current parliament, who have opposed measures that promote shared decision making with the Maori, and have called to abolish the reserved Maori electorates.

### Next Steps

The programme provided a valuable opportunity to connect with partners with whom CPA UK can cooperate with to achieve mutual objectives, including the Parliaments of Fiji and New Zealand, the British High Commissions in Suva and Wellington, and stakeholders in civil society.

The insights gained from these interactions will shape CPA UK's forward planning in the Asia-Pacific region for the present and coming financial years. CPA UK continues to regularly engage with Fiji, New Zealand, and other Pacific legislatures through multilateral programmes focused on its five strategic themes of security, modern slavery, women in parliament, public accounts committees, and trade.

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**PROGRAMME: FIJI**4-9 June 2023

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**DAY 1: MONDAY 5 JUNE**

0900-1000	<b>Meeting with the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre</b>
1100-1200	<b>Meeting with Integrity Fiji</b>
1230-1330	<b>Lunch with Rainbow Pride Foundation</b>
1400-1530	<b>PhysioNet/Spinal Injuries Association disability support equipment Consignment Handover Ceremony</b>
1600-1700	<b>Meeting with Fiji Police Force Cyber Crime Division</b>
1700-1800	<b>Meeting with Nicola Noble, Deputy British High Commissioner to Fiji</b>

**DAY 2: TUESDAY 6 JUNE**

1000-1045	<b>Meeting with Hon Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu, Speaker of the Parliament of Fiji</b>
1045-1100	<b>Tour of the Parliament of Fiji</b>
1100-1145	<b>Meeting with the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs</b>
1145-1230	<b>Meeting with Hon Alitia Bainivalu, Assistant Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation and Hon Sashi Kiran, Assistant Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation</b>
1230-1400	<b>Lunch hosted by the Parliament of Fiji</b>

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**PROGRAMME: NEW ZEALAND**4-9 June 2023

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**DAY 1: WEDNESDAY 7 JUNE**

- 1630-1800 **Tour of Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa**
- 1900-2030 **Dinner Briefing from Samatha Pass, Deputy British High Commissioner to New Zealand**

**DAY 2: THURSDAY 8 JUNE**

- 1030-1130 **Tour of the Parliament of New Zealand**
- 1130-1230 **Observe Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee Estimates hearing on Vote Defence/Vote Defence Force**
- 1230-1300 **Meeting with Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee**
- 1300-1345 **Lunch Meeting with Hon. Ingrid Leary MP, Co-Chair of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians New Zealand**
- 1355-1430 **Observe Oral Questions to Ministers**
- 1445-1530 **Meeting with New Zealand Election 2023 Team**
- 1530-1600 **Meeting with Gerry Brownlee , Chair of CPA New Zealand, Hon. Anahila Kanongata'a, Chair of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Pacific Region, and Hon. Ingrid Leary, Co-Chair of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians New Zealand**
- 1600-1630 **Meeting with Social Services and Community Committee**



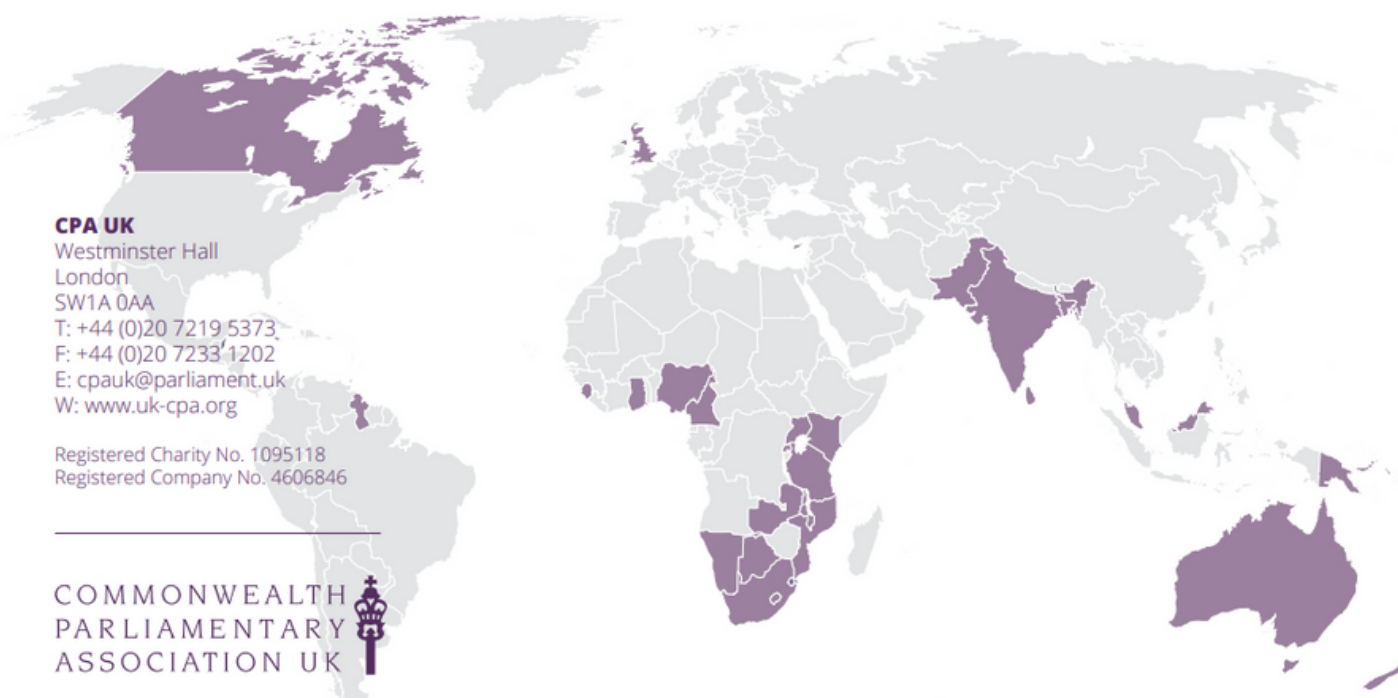
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**PROGRAMME: NEW ZEALAND**4-9 June 2023

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**DAY THREE: FRIDAY 9 JUNE****Visit to Mana Electorate with Hon. Barbara Edmonds MP**

0900-0930	<b>Introductions and Overview</b>
0940-1030	<b>Visit to the The 502 Rangatahi Ora</b>
1030-1130	<b>Visit to Partners Porirua</b>
1200-1330	<b>Lunch with Pania Tyson-Nathan, Chief Executive of New Zealand Maori Tourism</b>
1345-1445	<b>Visit to Nga Uri o Whiti Te Rā Mai Le Moana Trust</b>
	<b>End of Mana Electorate Visit</b>
1600-1700	<b>Visit to Pukeahu National War Memorial Park</b>



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**Joshua Drake**