

**FIJI INSTITUTE OF ACCOUNTANTS
WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP SERIES
INAUGURAL EVENT MONDAY 04 MARCH 2019**

SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE FIJI INSTITUTE OF ACCOUNTANTS PRESIDENT ZARIN KHAN

The Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism; Local Government; Housing & Community Development Premila Devi Kumar

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed appropriate and absolutely fitting to have our first ever female Minister for Trade and Investment as our Chief Guest on this special occasion to launch the Fiji Institute of Accountants (FIA) **Women in Leadership** series. This date was deliberately chosen as it is the start of the week which will culminate in the celebration of International Women's Day on Friday 08 March 2019.

As the premier accounting body in Fiji and within the region the FIA recognises the need for more women in leadership in all fields. The Women's Initiative Committee at the FIA has an important mission and objectives which is to promote an environment conducive to equal opportunity and engagement of both males and females with a focus of advancing women to leadership positions whilst having successful and desirable work-life balance. With the distinct lack of women in senior Accounting and Finance positions, it is essential to consider that women and men often approach life differently. This fact also applies to women and men when approaching their careers and the workplace. If an organisation wants to retain their talented female employees and all professional staff; these differences should be considered seriously. The FIA **Women in Leadership** series will focus on identifying issues facing women's advancement in Accounting, Finance and leadership roles.

Within the Institute since it was established in 1972 to date, we have had 34 Presidents of which 5 have been women.

Our very first female President was Jenny Seeto from 1994/1996. Jenny is currently abroad and sends her best wishes for this event. Anjnish Jokhan was President from 2002/2003 and has since migrated to New Zealand. Lisa Apted was the next female President from 2005/2006. Our current and ONLY female Council member and Chair of the Western Committee Renu Chand was President from 2014/2015. Our first President from the public sector was Finau Nagera from 2017/2018. Today we have Lisa, Renu and Finau all here with us.

Of the 42 Chartered Accountants with certificate of Public Practice, only 5 are women.

I would like to add that we have appointed Beverly Seeto as our Executive Director in February this year, our first female ED after 47 years of the Institute's establishment.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the FIA looks forward to improving these statistics in future by encouraging women to aspire to be leaders in their respective fields. We know that actions do speak louder than words and after much thought we decided to initiate this event to provide opportunities for women to listen, participate and learn.

And I must thank each one of you here today, as well as your employers, for your support in highlighting an important cause. I hope to see you and your colleagues (including men) at these quarterly events as our organising team are already working on our quarter two event tentatively scheduled for early June, and brainstorming for the quarter three event.

I would like to thank the Organising Team who put this event together very quickly from concept to execution. This event was such a success that it was fully sold within 2 days of release and we had a Waiting List established before the closing date. Incidentally the organising team is made of all women.

For this event the Organising Team has worked with rural women in Fiji for the inaugural event's memento gift for you. Rise Beyond the Reef is a non-profit organisation and they assist women to empower themselves through various initiatives such as their Traditional Contemporary Arts & Crafts Income Generating Program. On Twitter they state that they "bridge the divide between government, rural communities and the private sector in the South Pacific, sustainably creating a better world for women and children."

Whilst focusing on women in leadership roles, the FIA recognises that there is a large proportion of women in rural areas and we would like to help them develop their leadership skills by providing them with a source of income.

We would like to acknowledge the kind sponsorship of BSP Life for the 2019 series. The values of BSP Life include Leadership (*We inspire, we change, we live our values and lead by example*), Professionalism (*We commit ourselves to continual self-development to achieve standards of excellence in our performance*), Teamwork (*We work with and for each other, we progress together*) and the Vanua & Community (*We respect, value and support the communities in which we operate*). The Women's Initiative Committee and the FIA hold similar values to BSP Life. Thank you, BSP Life.

I will now invite the Honourable Minister to come up to launch the FIA ***Women in Leadership*** series.

Please join me in warmly welcoming the Honourable Minister.

Thank you and I wish all women a very Happy International Women's Day.