FIJI TAXI ASSOCIATION

"To Protect and Promote the Rights and Interests of the Taxi and Hire Car Proprietors Fiji Wide"

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

30 September 2026

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# FIJI TAXI ASSOCIATION WELCOMES SIX-MONTH EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY TAXI FARE ADJUSTMENT

The Fiji Taxi Association (FTA) welcomes the decision by the Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission (FCCC) to extend the current temporary taxi fare adjustment for a further six months, until 31 March 2027.

The decision follows several weeks of intensive engagement between the Association and FCCC, including direct discussions with the FCCC Chief Executive Officer and senior staff, verbal representations, written submissions and the collection of financial information from taxi operators.

FTA President Mohammed Faiyaz said the Association had strongly argued throughout the discussions that returning the industry to the previous $1.00 per kilometre rate was neither viable nor sustainable.

"The $1.00 per kilometre fare was set in 2011. Fifteen years later, the cost of almost everything required to operate a taxi has increased substantially, including fuel, tyres, spare parts, servicing, insurance, registration, maintenance and vehicle financing. We made it very clear that expecting operators to return to a fare determined under the economic conditions of 2011 was simply not sustainable," Mr Faiyaz said.

The Association also raised the significant cost and practical difficulties that would have been imposed on thousands of operators if they had been required to recalibrate their taxi meters to the previous rate from 1 October, particularly when the fare remained under active review.

"We strongly articulated the meter recalibration issue during our discussions. Operators should not be required to spend money recalibrating meters backwards, only to potentially have to recalibrate them again following a subsequent fare determination. We are pleased that FCCC has taken this practical issue into account."

The Association said an important part of its negotiations with FCCC concerned the evidence required for the fare review. FTA argued that obtaining detailed individual submissions from approximately 4,500 operators was neither realistic nor necessary for establishing the industry's operating costs.

Following discussions, the Association and FCCC agreed on a substantially more manageable sample of operators from whom detailed cost information could be collected and assessed.

FTA subsequently worked directly with its members to collect operator submissions and supporting information for transmission to FCCC.

"This outcome demonstrates why constructive engagement between regulators and industry representatives is important. We appreciate that FCCC was willing to meet with us, listen to the practical realities facing operators and work towards a more reasonable process for obtaining the information it required," Mr Faiyaz said.

FCCC has confirmed that the current temporary fare adjustment, which was due to expire on 30 September, will now remain in effect until 31 March 2027. This also means taxi operators will not be required to recalibrate their meters to the previous rate during the extension period.

The Association recognises that the extension is an interim measure rather than a permanent resolution of the taxi fare issue.

FTA will therefore immediately begin preparing its case for a permanent fare determination that properly reflects the contemporary cost of operating a taxi business in Fiji.

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"The next six months give us an opportunity to put together a comprehensive and evidence-based submission on what a fair and sustainable permanent taxi fare should look like. We intend to work closely with our members and engage constructively with FCCC throughout that process," Mr Faiyaz said.

## Wider public transport issues require attention

FTA said it also intends to use the coming months to pursue broader structural problems affecting taxi operators and Fiji's public service transport sector.

The Association looks forward to working with relevant authorities and other public service transport organisations, including the Fiji Bus Operators Association, on issues affecting the sustainability and safety of the sector.

Mr Faiyaz said these include the operation of illegal and unlicensed passenger transport services, enforcement against such operators, the safety of taxi and bus drivers following incidents of attacks and abuse, restrictions affecting the transfer and sale of taxi permits, and other regulatory and operational issues confronting public service transport providers.

"The fare issue is only one of a number of serious challenges confronting our industry. Licensed taxi operators comply with regulatory requirements, pay permit and vehicle costs and operate within regulated fares. They are entitled to expect that the laws governing passenger transport will also be properly and consistently enforced."

"We also need greater attention to the safety of the men and women who provide public transport services. Taxi and bus drivers perform an essential public service, often late at night and in difficult circumstances, and attacks and abuse against drivers must be treated seriously."

Mr Faiyaz said FTA wants to pursue these issues through dialogue and constructive engagement with Government, regulators, enforcement agencies and other transport industry organisations.

"We welcome today's decision as an important outcome for taxi operators and their families. We thank our members who responded to our request for information and provided submissions at short notice, and we acknowledge FCCC for engaging with the Association and considering the industry's concerns."

"Our work does not end with this six-month extension. We will now turn our attention to securing a fair and sustainable long-term fare structure and addressing the wider issues affecting Fiji's taxi industry."

**ENDS**

**Issued by:**
Mohammed Faiyaz
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