

Second draft of Bill nears end

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The Solicitor-General's Office is in the final stages of drafting a Freedom of Information Bill. Rupeni Nawaqakuta, a senior lawyer at the office, said the second draft of the Bill was just about complete. The first draft was made in 1998. Mr Nawaqakuta was responding to criticisms from political parties that the Bill should have been taken to Parliament a long time ago. Mr Nawaqakuta said more time was needed because such matters required detailed work. "It takes time to compare the two drafts and analyse things," he said. He said the drawing up of laws were matters that could not be rushed. Mr Nawaqakuta said there was a need for such a Bill because the Constitution required it. "This is done to ensure a transparent and open government with good governance. To ensure that the Government is accountable, based on the principles of anti-corruption tools," he said. The Bill is expected to be submitted to the Prime Minister's office by September. (01/08/2006)

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Parties criticize Bill delay

Sunday, July 16, 2006

THREE political parties have blamed the Solicitor General's office for the delay in enacting a Freedom of Information Bill. The Bill, according to first parliamentary counsel Ru-peni Nawaqakuta, is in its final drafting stage. National Federation Party spokesman Prem Singh said the Bill was long overdue. He said it would be difficult to comment on the contents of the Bill unless the party looked at it. Fiji Labour Party spokesman Lekh Ram Vayeshnoi said the Solicitor-General's office was dragging its feet on an important issue. We want it to be implemented quickly. We had introduced it during our term and it was in the process when the SDL government came in," he said. Mr Vayeshnoi said it was unfortunate the SDL Government did nothing about it. "We would like to see the Bill brought to Parliament without any further delay and we are not just going to sit and see what's happening around," he said. Opposition leader Mick Beddoes said the Bill should have been enacted in the last Parliament. He said people had a right to access information and the delay in the tabling reflected poorly on the government of the day. "Like most of our laws, it is the enforcement' side that generally lets the people down, so those that are in authority and vested with the responsibility of ensuing full compliance with the laws must ensure they do their job and enforce the law," Mr Beddoes said. (01/08/2006)

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