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**Statement by the Minister for Information, Mediation Relations &  
Telecommunications, Hon. Marieta Rigamoto  
Response to comments by UPP Member of Parliament, Hon. Mick  
Beddoes - Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> January, 2006**

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"Mr Mick Beddoes, leader of the United Peoples Party, does not understand Constitutional procedures governing the work of Ministers.

"Mr Beddoes should familiarise himself properly before making poorly-informed public comments. He needs to think issues through before pronouncing on them."

Mrs Rigamoto was commenting on criticism of the Prime Minister by Mr Beddoes over the differences with the Commander of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces. Mr Beddoes had questioned why the Prime minister was leaving these differences for the Minister for Home Affairs to deal with.

"Mr Beddoes remarks were one-sided and did not address all aspects of the issue. He really should consider where the problem actually lies and then make his comments on that.

"The Prime Minister followed established practice which respected the constitutional role and authority of individual Ministers. He also respected a Minister's Oath of Office on being appointed by the President. In that Oath, a Minister is entrusted by the President to advise him on matters that fall within the Minister's portfolio.

"In this instance, the Minister for Home Affairs is the minister responsible for advising the President on all matters relating to the RFMF.

"The Prime Minister fully respects that. This is why Mr Qarase has always left it to the Minister to deal with his Excellency the President and His Excellency the Vice President on RFMF matters in the first instance.

"The Prime Minister has full confidence in Mr Vosanibola as Minister for Home Affairs. At the same time, Mr Qarase stands ready to be involved at the right time and when the circumstances make it necessary.

"Minister Vosanibola consults regularly with the Prime Minister and acts with his full support.

"The Prime Minister is chair of the Security Council and has always been ready to convene the Council when the situation warrants it, and on the advice of the Minister for Home Affairs.

"The Prime Minister and the Government also respect the fact that the President is the Commander in Chief of the Fiji Military Forces and the appointing authority for the Army Commander.

"Accordingly, the Government has always attached priority importance to not acting unilaterally and to consulting very closely with the President and the Vice President on RFMF matters."

Mrs Rigamoto also explained that an outstanding feature of Prime Minister Qarase's leadership is that he believes in team effort. As Prime Minister, he sees his role as encouraging his individual Ministers in carrying out their responsibilities. He is always there ready to give his support when needed.

“As the Head of Government, the Prime Minister supports his Ministers. He has confidence in their ability to carry out their responsibilities, and does not interfere in the day-to-day operations of their portfolios.”