



## MEDIA RELEASE

### AUSTRALIA AND FIJI: A VISION FOR AN ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

The Australia Fiji Business Council today called on the Australian and Fiji governments to join with business to establish a vision which would lead to a full economic partnership between the two countries over the next thirty to fifty years.

Speaking in Nadi after the Australia Fiji Ministerial Talks in Nadi, President of the Australia Fiji Business Council, Mr Bob Lyon (Managing Director Pacific, ANZ Banking Group), said that the most effective means of poverty alleviation is to grow the economy through empowering the growth of the private sector.

While commending Ministers Downer and Tavola for their commitment to the bilateral relationship, Mr Lyon said “the relationship still dances around the edges of unlocking its, and Fiji’s, true potential”.

Mr Lyon said “with the correct policy settings, Fiji, the east coast of Australia and New Zealand can become a dynamic economic and business triangle”.

“The last thirty years Australia and Fiji have had essentially an aid relationship: it is now time to create a vision of that becoming a full economic partnership.”

“This will require some radical thinking outside the current policy paradigm in both countries”, Mr Lyon said.

“To move towards this vision, there needs to be new thinking in a range of economic policy settings including in customs and quarantine, labour market and visa regulation, exchange control and fiscal policy, and taxation policy, and business practice in Fiji needs to modernise.”

Mr Lyon called on the Australian and Fiji governments to take positive action to bring life to the Australia Fiji Trade and Economic Relations Agreement (AFTERA) which entered into force in 1997.

“With the correct policy settings Fiji can realise its full potential, but it requires vision and commitment by government and business to work together to achieve this”, Mr Lyon said.

Mr Lyon welcomed the agreement of Mr Downer and Mr Tavola at the Ministerial Forum to establish a working group of officials and business to examine means of further enhancing the bilateral business relationship.

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