



ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE FIJI – ST KILDA FOOTBALL CLUB STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION, HON VILIAME GAVOKA

**Tuesday, 16 September 2025
9:30AM**

**Albert Park
Suva**

1. The Deputy Australian High Commissioner to Fiji, Mrs. Clair Macnamara
2. Chief Executive Officer of St Kilda Football Club, Carl Dilena,
3. Permanent Secretary for Tourism and Civil Aviation, Ms Salaseini Daunabuna,
4. Acting Chief Executive Officer Tourism Fiji, Robert Thompson,
5. Chief Executive Officer Fiji National Sports Commission, Peter Mazey,
6. Acting Chief Executive Officer, Fiji Sports Council, Gilbert Vakalalabure,

7. St Kilda AFL Players Nasiah Wanganeen-Milera, Mitchito Owens and Emily Fiedler,
8. Distinguished Guests,
9. Members of the Media,
10. Ladies and Gentlemen.

INTRODUCTION

Bula Vinaka,

On behalf of the Government of Fiji, today, it is my honour to officially announce a **landmark three-year partnership** between the Fijian Government and the St Kilda Football Club.

This is a first. St Kilda has never before had an international partner. And they chose Fiji. They chose us because they see what we see — great opportunity.

SPORTS TOURISM

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a tourism destination, we have long advocated for being recognised for more than just our beaches, resorts and warm people. That is who we are but we are and can be a lot more. We have endeavoured and invested in hosting large meetings and conferences, in music festivals, in medical tourism and in top tier sporting events.

The partnership positions Fiji as St Kilda's first international partner, expanding the Saints' presence in the Pacific while creating pathways for Australian Rules Football to grow locally.

But it goes far beyond sports. It is about **fostering deep connections, creating tangible opportunities for our**

youth, and showcasing Fiji's warmth, talent, and culture on a global stage.

A core part of this mission is to showcase Fiji as the leading holiday destination for Australians. The AFL commands a passionate fan base that stretches into every corner of Australia.

Through St Kilda's platforms—through their digital storytelling, their fan engagement, and exclusive travel offers—we will profile our unique culture, our warm hospitality, and our world-class experiences directly to them.

I am confident this collaboration will significantly strengthen Fiji's visibility in our most important visitor market and inspire more Australians to answer the call of "Bula!" for their next holiday.

PATHWAYS FOR SPORTS AND YOUTH

Ladies and Gentlemen,

But it doesn't stop there. This is also about our young people.

We see this as an exciting platform to inspire young Fijians, support our communities, and strengthen the people-to-people ties that bind Fiji and Australia together.

Through this partnership, we will see player camps in Fiji, grassroots clinics, talent development programs and education programs and wellbeing initiatives. Our aim is to support local communities and inspire young Fijians to reach their full potential.

Our kids will learn, they will play, and they will dream big.

We will see new pathways for Fijians to enter Australian football, and maybe one day — just maybe — a Fijian star playing on the biggest stage of all.

That is how you inspire the next generation. That is how you give hope and opportunity.

From 2026, Fiji will be incorporated into the club's St Kilda Business program, creating opportunities for our business partners to connect and unlock new trade and tourism pathways.

While an official AFL match in Fiji is not immediately planned, the Saints will maintain a strong and vibrant presence across our islands through grassroots clinics, talent development initiatives, and brand activations that will bring the excitement of the game directly to our people.

And to ensure every Fijian can be a part of this journey, St Kilda has launched a special **Fiji Saints Membership, which is free for all Fijian citizens.**

This membership grants exclusive access to tailored content, updates on future club visits, and invitations to special events and clinics.

CONCLUSION

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We will deliver our partnership through strong collaboration between Tourism Fiji and the Fiji National Sports Commission.

This is more than a deal. This is a commitment. A commitment to sport. A commitment to tourism. A commitment to our Vuvale Partnership.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.