



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

“Ensuring Aviation Safety and Regulatory Compliance in Fiji’s Flight Training Sector”

By the Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Acting Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation, Hon. Ifereimi Vasu

**2nd October, 2025
0900hrs**

**Parliament of the Republic of Fiji
Suva**

The Honourable Speaker,

The Honourable Prime Minister,

The Honourable Leader of Opposition,

Honourable members of this August House,

Members of the public watching live in Fiji and abroad,

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr Speaker Sir,

Thank you for allowing me to deliver a Ministerial Statement to acknowledge and respond to the concerns raised about the disruptions to students at Pacific Flying School.

Mr Speaker,

First and foremost, to the students and families affected, we hear you. Aviation training is a major investment of time, money and hope. Government's priority is your safety and Fiji's reputation, which depends on an independent regulator making decisions on evidence, not on politics or social media.

On Tuesday, an Honorable member of the Opposition stated and alleged that the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji

(CAAF) imposed unjustified restrictions on Pacific Flying School, including rejecting engines overhauled overseas without proper justification.

Mr Speaker,

Allow me to state the **facts**, the **law**, and the **timeline of events**, so this august house is clear on where the delays have come from, **and it is not from CAAF or the Government.**

The Law and Standards

Mr. Speaker,

Under Fiji's Air Navigation Regulations, only an Approved Maintenance Organization may carry out aircraft maintenance; if maintenance or parts are not approved, a Certificate of Airworthiness can cease to be in force.

Our Airworthiness standards also require prior arrangements with CAAF before using a foreign organization not approved by CAAF. These are long-standing protections to prevent incidents and accidents arising from non-compliance.

What Actually Happened

Mr. Speaker,

Suncoast Aero Engines was not approved under Fiji's system when the operator installed three overhauled engines (namely DQ-SKI, DQ-VAT, DQ-FTI). That installation occurred without prior CAAF approval, engaging the legal provisions I've just outlined.

CAAF then did exactly what a responsible regulator must do, it opened a due-process pathway to assess Suncoast, requesting an application and proposing audit dates in May, then June and July 2025. Despite multiple follow-ups, confirmation to proceed was not provided by the operator and provider.

As safety cases were required to consider any one-off acceptance, initial submissions were incomplete. After iterative work, a revised safety case was accepted, and on 16th September 2025 CAAF issued a one-off approval with conditions, a practical step to keep students progressing while ensuring safety.

The Chronology (Key Milestones)

Mr. Speaker Sir,

Allow me to indulge this august house on some key milestones on this issue:

→ **On the 5th of Feb 2025** — An Audit notification was sent to the operator.

→ **On the 17th of Mar to 2nd of Apr 2025** — an Aircraft Maintenance Organization (AMO) Audit with an exit meeting on the 02nd of April 2025 was conducted, where serious compliance issues, including unapproved engine overhauls were discussed.

→ **On the 8th of May 2025** — The AMO certificate was renewed with conditions; Certificates of Airworthiness (COA) for two aircrafts was suspended, pending compliance.

→ **On the 9th May 2025** — a tripartite meeting between the Ministry, CAAF and the Operator took place, where a 30-day window was granted to ready the overseas provider for CAAF audit, and a weekly reporting schedule was required.

→ **30 Jul–3 Sep 2025** — Safety-case cycle: where the initial submission was unacceptable and on the 3rd of September, **the revised case was accepted.**

→ **16 Sep 2025** — A one-off approval was issued with conditions to facilitate training while safeguards are in place.

Across this period, CAAF repeatedly sought confirmation to audit the overseas provider; **none was received.**

What This Means

Mr. Speaker,

The root cause of delay has been the operator's non-compliance and incomplete approvals **and not regulatory inaction.**

CAAF has assisted as far as it properly can, proposing audit dates outside its original workplan, meeting repeatedly with the operator, and ultimately issuing a conditional one-off approval once a satisfactory safety case was put forward.

An operator with over two decades of experience in Fiji's system knows these requirements well; **compliance is not optional.**

Transparency and Risk

Mr. Speaker,

The Opposition demands that CAAF “show the risk.” Regulators worldwide apply risk-based oversight, and operators present safety cases and acceptable means of compliance.

CAAF has communicated through the proper channels and will continue to do so; some technical matters are confidential while reviews are active. That is normal, ICAO-aligned practice.

What is not normal is to conduct safety certification by press release.

Our Commitment

To conclude Mr. Speaker, allow me to speak to the students and families, **we will keep supporting a safe, lawful and sustainable path to qualification.**

To all operators, bring complete documentation and safety cases early; **CAAF will prioritize timely decisions.**

And to this august house, **Fiji's reputation is strengthened, not weakened**, when our independent regulator applies the rules fairly and consistently.

Safety first, due process always, **and never at the cost of an accident we could have prevented.**

My office will support any good-faith engagement that delivers **a safe, lawful and sustainable training outcome.**

Vinaka vakalevu Mr. Speaker.