



PRESS RELEASE (No. 7 of 2015)

**“MINISTER’S COMMENTS ARE INAPPROPRIATE”**

**STATEMENT BY CHRISTOPHER PRYDE, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC  
PROSECUTIONS**

In a report broadcast and published on the Internet by FBC news today (1.7.15) entitled “Minister disgusted by rape cases, wants severe sentences” the Minister for Women and Children Rosy Akbar in reference to recent statistics released by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) stated that she “will ensure that severe sentences are meted out by the courts.”

The Minister is to be advised that sentencing is a judicial function and undertaken carefully by the courts upon conviction of an accused person in accordance with the Sentencing and Penalties Decree 2009 and the relevant judicial tariffs for the offence. The courts impose sentences that reflect the seriousness of the offending and take into account the various aggravating and mitigating factors particular to each individual case.

It is therefore inappropriate for the Minister for Women and Children as a member of the executive branch of government to attempt to interfere in the sentencing process which is clearly a judicial function.

---

In regards to the criminal justice system in general, the Minister is to be reminded that under section 117 of the Constitution, it is the Director of Public Prosecutions alone that is responsible for initiating criminal prosecutions or withdrawing those prosecutions.

The decision to charge a person is made following a careful review of the evidence and charges are only brought if there is a reasonable prospect of a conviction and it is in the public interest.

The decision to prosecute is made on these grounds only and not to champion a political cause no matter how deserving.

The ODPP will not tolerate any interference in this process by any Minister of Government.

---END---

1 July 2015

*The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is an independent office established under section 117 of the 2013 Fijian Constitution. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is motivated by the principle that it is in the interests of justice that the guilty be brought to justice and the innocent are not wrongly convicted.*

---