



Media Release

AUSTRALIAN BAR ASSOCIATION EXPRESSES GRAVE CONCERN FOR FIJI

The Vice President of the Australian Bar Association, Mr Peter Riordan S.C., said today:

“The pretence that the military junta of Frank Bainimarama was acting in accordance with the constitution has been removed by the declaration of the Fiji’s Court of Appeal last Thursday. It is now clear that Fiji is ruled by an illegitimate military dictatorship. It is critical that governments throughout the world, and particularly of the South Pacific, act strongly and demand the return of democracy in Fiji. This is necessary not only because it is the right thing; but to support the brave people of Fiji in the media, the law and the community who are prepared to speak up and call for a return of the rule of law.”

Mr Riordan said that the Australian Government should request undertakings from the Commodore Frank Bainimarama, the purported Prime Minister of Fiji, that the personal welfare of the judiciary of Fiji and Australians living in Fiji will be assured.

He also said “It is imperative that the Australian Government, through our Fijian consulate or otherwise, monitors the actions of the military regime particularly for any interference with the courts, judges, lawyers or court users.”

Mr Riordan said that Australia should be at the forefront of international action against the military dictatorship. “The Fijian army is substantially financed by the United Nations through international deployments. The conduct of the army in ending the rule of law in Fiji means that it is totally inappropriate that it should have any continuing role in the maintenance of law & order in the international community. Presumably the Australian Government will take such action as it considers necessary to withdraw support for the regime through tourism and sporting ties.”

-END-

For further information, please contact Peter Riordan S.C. on (03) 9225 7162 Or 0412570625.

Tuesday 14 April, 2009