

Mental health laws outdated: Doctor

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Aisake Vuladua leads a meke during celebrations at Davuilevu in Nausori yesterday.

FIJI'S mental health laws are outdated and need to be replaced, says Saint Giles Hospital acting medical superintendent Doctor Peni Biukoto.

Speaking at a World Mental Health Day program in Suva yesterday, he said, "There is a need for a new revised comprehensive Mental Health Act to replace the outdated narrowly focused Mental Treatment Act."

Dr Biukoto said there was a need for political will and commitment.

"This arises from the Government recognising there is no health without mental health and making mental health a priority in its national vision and planning," he said.

He said was a need for a national mental health policy, which should be a multi-sectoral collaborative document covering important key areas such as advocacy, promotion, prevention, treatment, treatment methods, rehabilitation, employment, housing, human rights, welfare and education.

"Revision started last year with Fiji Law Reform Commission but was delayed this year because of the unavailability of funding," he said.

"The National Advisory Council on Mental Health, a multi-sectoral group formed in 1999, became inactive after 2000.

"I advise that we make a focused concerted strategy to establish and formalise a national advisory and coordinating body through appropriate legislation."

He said three to eight doctors had worked the field annually for the past eight years.

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