

IN THE INDEPENDENT LEGAL SERVICE COMMISSION

AT SUVA

ILSC CASE NO. 007 OF 2025

BETWEEN : CHIEF REGISTRAR

APPLICANT

AND : PAULA VEA

RESPONDENT

Counsel : Mr S Nand for the Applicant
Respondent in Person

Paper Hearing: 9 July 2025

Date of Sanction: 9 July 2025

SANCTION

- [1] The allegation against the legal practitioner, Paula Vea, is that he had failed to respond to a complaint made to the Chief Registrar by Avinesh Sen on 23 July 2024. Mr Sen is a client of the legal practitioner, and the complaint concerns the manner in which the legal practitioner was handling his client's probate matter.
- [2] On 26 August 2024, the Chief Registrar brought the complaint to the attention of the legal practitioner. The Chief Registrar gave the legal practitioner 14 days to respond to the complaint in writing, as required by section 108 of the Legal Practitioners Act. The legal practitioner did not respond.
- [3] On 18 September, Mr Sakeasi Tuni of the Legal Practitioners Unit sent an email reminding the legal practitioner to respond to the complaint.

- [4] On 19 September 2024, the legal practitioner emailed Mr Tunu, apologizing for the delay and requesting one more day to respond to the complaint. However, he did not respond to the complaint as promised in his email.
- [5] On 24 September 2024, Mr Tunu sent another email to the legal practitioner reminding him to respond to the complaint. However, the legal practitioner did not respond.
- [6] On 9 October 2024, the Chief Registrar issued the legal practitioner a Section 108 notice under the Legal Practitioners Act, and granted him a further 14 days to respond to the complaint made against him by Mr Sen. The legal practitioner did not respond.
- [7] On 23 June 2025, the Chief Registrar initiated disciplinary proceedings against the legal practitioner, as he was deemed to have committed professional misconduct by failing to respond to the complaint contained in the notice.
- [8] After the disclosures were served on the legal practitioner, he accepted the truth of the allegation and provided written mitigation to the Commission.
- [9] The legal practitioner was admitted to the bar on 11 May 2023. At the time the allegation arose, he was employed as a junior lawyer at Niudamu lawyers, based in Rakiraki. He practiced with little supervision from his principal, who by then had become a politician and was spending most of his time in Suva.
- [10] When he became aware of the complaint made against him by Mr Sen, he expedited the probate matter, but overlooked to respond to the complaint lodged with the Chief Registrar.

[11] The legal practitioner is in his mid-thirties and is married with three young children. He regrets his oversight in failing to comply with the law that required him to respond to the complaint lodged with the Chief Registrar. He says he is remorseful.

[12] The legal practitioner was unemployed from February 2025 until 29 June 2025, when he was re-employed by the same law firm.

[13] Although the legal practitioner's excuse that he was left to manage the office unsupervised by his principal does not absolve him of the responsibility to respond to complaint of professional misconduct made against him to the Chief Registrar, his employer, Niudamu Lawyers bears some responsibility for the conduct. The legal practitioner was a junior and inexperienced lawyer who should not have been left to practice without supervision from a senior practitioner at Niudamu Lawyers. There was a dereliction of professional duty by Niudamu Lawyers in leaving a junior and inexperienced lawyer to run the practice with little or no supervision.

[14] I do not believe that this is a case where I should impose a punitive sanction, such as suspending the legal practitioner's practising certificate.

[15] I order:

- i. The legal practitioner is hereby admonished for his professional misconduct.
- ii. In the event the legal practitioner has not responded to the complaint made against him to the Chief Registrar as of today, he must do so by 25 July 2025.

- iii. If the legal practitioner fails to respond to the complaint by 25 July 2025, the Chief Registrar is to suspend his practising certificate until such time as the legal practitioner satisfactorily responds to the complaint.
- iv. Niudamu Lawyers is to pay the Chief Registrar costs in the sum of \$500.00 by 25 July 2025.



[Handwritten signature]

Justice Daniel Goundar
COMMISSIONER

Solicitors:

Legal Practitioners Unit for the Applicant

Respondent in Person