

PRESS RELEASE



With Purpose and Principle: Dr Marcus Brand

Thursday, 29 May 2025: Meet Dr Marcus Brand, chairperson of the Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission (FTRC). At first glance, you might think of Dr Brand as a visiting academic and you wouldn't be wrong. With decades of experience across peacebuilding, governance, and human rights around the globe, his career has touched many continents and cultures. But spend just a few minutes talking with him and it becomes clear why he's in Fiji: not to lead from above, but to support, listen, and guide a profound process of healing and truth-telling.

Dr Brand carries out his role with deep respect for the people of Fiji, their culture, and their sovereignty. He believes in walking alongside communities, empowering local voices, honoring indigenous knowledge, and creating space for truth-telling. His leadership reflects the Commission's commitment to combining global best practices with local ownership, working hand in hand to examine truths, foster reconciliation, and build a stronger, more united future.

As one of five Commissioners on the independent Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Dr Brand is part of an important mission to examine the political upheavals since 1987 and their impact on people's lives. From emotional trauma and loss to displacement and systemic injustice, the Commission is confronting the difficult truths shaping Fiji's history.

In a time when healing calls for courage, inclusion, and integrity, Dr Brand stands as a trusted friend and ally, someone who knows that true leadership begins with listening.

Recently, he shared with Communication Specialist Maria Vula his strong belief in the transformative power of inclusive dialogue, bridge-building, and empowering those traditionally marginalised. "I see my work as supporting societies to heal, rebuild trust, and shape their own futures," he says.

This profile is part of a series on the Commissioners of the Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Q. Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I grew up in Austria, where I benefitted from a stable and supportive environment. After studying law and international relations in Vienna and other cities in Europe, I spent most of my professional life working in the fields of diplomacy, democratic governance, human rights and justice, and constitutional development, which has also taken me to many places affected by war and conflict, crisis or tension. My career has taken me across Europe, Asia, and the Pacific, working with organisations such as the United Nations, the European Union and other international organisations. Personally, I am someone who deeply believes in the transformative power of inclusive dialogue, building bridges, networks and platforms, and empowering those traditionally marginalised. I see my work as a way of supporting societies to heal, rebuild trust, and shape their own futures.

Q. Your career has taken you across Europe, Asia, and beyond, working with institutions like the UN, the OSCE, and the EU. What motivated you to pursue a path in international governance and democratic development?

My motivation has always been rooted in a deep respect for human dignity and a belief that institutions should serve people, not the other way around. I grew up in a post-war European context where democracy and reconciliation were hard-won achievements, and I saw how fragile they can be, when I witnessed the fall of the Iron Curtain and the breakup of Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union. That led me to dedicate my career to supporting

societies facing or emerging from conflict, working with local actors to build institutions that are fair, inclusive, and resilient.

Q. Having worked in diverse contexts such as Ukraine, Nepal, Kosovo, and Myanmar, what key lessons have you drawn from those experiences that you believe are particularly relevant to your role in this Commission?

One key lesson is that neither of these two contexts are the same—each society has its own history, grievances, and strengths. But across all contexts, meaningful progress depends on listening—truly listening—to people’s experiences and perspectives and an honest appreciation of historical facts. Another lesson is that justice or sustainable reconciliation cannot be imposed from outside; it must be owned and driven by those directly affected. My role is to support that process with integrity, transparency, and respect for local values and traditions.

Q. As the Chair of the Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission, what is your vision for the Commission’s work?

My vision is for the Commission to serve as a trusted space for truth-telling, acknowledgement, and collective healing. We aim to uncover and honor the experiences of all communities, especially those whose voices have historically been marginalised. At the same time, we want to contribute to building a foundation for a more just and unified future—one based on accountability, empathy, and shared understanding.

Q. The Commission’s work intersects with complex issues like transitional justice, memory, and accountability. How do you define these concepts in practice, especially in a post-conflict or divided society?

Transitional justice, to me, is about helping societies confront painful truths in ways that foster healing rather than deepen division. Memory is about recognising that the past lives on in people’s lives today—and that collective acknowledgment is a vital step toward justice. Accountability is not about punishment alone; it’s about recognising harm, addressing root causes, and restoring dignity. In practice, these concepts mean creating safe, inclusive, and participatory processes that put people’s experiences at the center.

Q. Trust is essential in any truth-seeking and reconciliation process. What steps is the Commission taking or planning to take to ensure it earns and maintains the trust of all communities it serves?

We are committed to transparency, inclusivity, and impartiality in everything we do. That means consulting widely, especially with communities that have felt excluded or disempowered. It means safeguarding the confidentiality and security of those who come forward, also by using the best available technology in our work. And it means consistently communicating—not only with our actions, but also the values that guide our work. Ultimately, trust must be earned, not assumed, and we’re fully aware of the responsibility we carry.

Q. You have supported dialogue and negotiation processes in many settings. In your view, what makes dialogue effective in fostering reconciliation, and how will it be integrated into the Commission’s work?

Effective dialogue is built on mutual respect and a willingness to engage with difficult truths. It’s not about agreement for its own sake, but about creating space where people feel seen and heard. In the Commission, we see dialogue as both a tool and a goal: it helps us gather testimony, understand diverse perspectives, and build bridges between communities. We’ll be working with local leaders, faith groups, and civil society to ensure that these conversations are grounded in cultural context and community ownership.

Q. What message would you share with communities who are still grappling with past injustices or feeling uncertain about the future? How can they participate in and contribute to the reconciliation journey?

To those communities, I would say: your pain is real, your stories matter, and your voice is essential. Reconciliation is not about forgetting—it’s about facing the past together and remembering with purpose so we can shape a different future. You can contribute by sharing your experiences, by listening to others, and by engaging in the Commission’s processes in whatever way feels safe and meaningful to you. This is your process. We are here to support, not to dictate.

About FTRC:

The FTRC is an independent entity set up for truth-telling, reconciliation, and national healing. The mandate of the FTRC is to examine past political upheavals and their impact on people's lives. The Commission is looking at the physical and emotional harm, loss of life and property, and systemic injustices on people.

The purpose of this work is to foster unity and social cohesion in a society where everyone feels safe, equal, included and able to thrive. The Commission seeks to honour the lived experiences of survivors by providing a platform for voices to be heard, validated, and acknowledged.

The Commission emphasises that truth-telling is not about retribution. It is about recognition, healing, to ensure that history is not repeated. Through reconciliation, the Commission aims to build a stronger, more just, and peaceful Fiji for future generations.

Note: The Commission is encouraging members of the public to contact us in relation to any of the above. We look forward to hearing from you.

Reach us by phone, email, or through our Facebook page, where a contact form is also available.

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