

PRESS RELEASE



Resilience Through the Rollercoaster: Graham Leung Reflects on Truth, Memory and Reconciliation

2026: *“The coups tested my resilience in a way that I could never have imagined.”*

For Graham Leung, a highly experienced and respected lawyer with more than 38 years of experience in law, diplomacy, and governance, those words carry the weight of lived experience.

During the FTRC expert hearing on Monday, February 23 in Suva, Mr Leung shared his experiences with Commissioners Rachna Nath and Rajendra Dass, along with Chairperson Joaquim da Fonseca of the Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He stepped forward not only as a legal professional but also as a witness to one of the most turbulent periods in Fiji’s modern history.

Mr Leung is a senior legal practitioner with extensive experience in governance, administrative law, constitutional law, litigation, and advisory services. Over nearly four decades, he has observed and navigated the legal and constitutional shifts that followed the country’s political upheavals from 1987 onward.

During the expert hearing he shared his professional and personal reflections on the impact of the political upheavals on the legal sector and the nation at large.

For Mr Leung, sharing his story was not merely procedural. It was deeply personal and purposeful.

“Looking back over the last 30 years I am amazed that I survived the rollercoaster. Even more surprising for me was the people of Fiji, who did their best to carry on and to pick up the pieces.”

His decision to come forward was rooted in a sense of duty to history and to future generations.

“It’s important for the future, for posterity, for Fiji to keep an historical record of the coups so that the next generation learn what happened, what we did wrong, so they don’t repeat the mistakes we made.”

He emphasised that the Commission holds a critical responsibility in recording the experience, dislocation and trauma suffered by so many since 1987.

Having known and worked with lawyers and judges who were either victims or enablers of the coups and having personally experienced some of the violations and excesses that took place, he felt compelled to ensure that his account would not be lost.

“I came forward to share my story so that it’s not lost forever. It will be for future historians to try and make sense of what happened during this dark chapter in our recent past.”

For Mr Leung, reconciliation is not a legal mechanism but a human process.

“For me reconciliation is a deeply personal process. It is not only about looking back and forgiving someone who has hurt or wronged you. It is very human to bear grudges but it is something we have to guard against.”

He believes reconciliation cannot be legislated or imposed.

“Reconciliation is not something that can be forced or imposed on anyone by Parliament passing a law. It must come from the heart and be volunteered. It is about coming to terms with something bad that has happened to you, or someone close to you, but recognising that if you don’t let go, it can harm you.”

In his view, forgiveness is central.

“My own view is that forgiveness is an integral part of reconciliation. How can you reconcile with someone if you still hate them and have unforgiveness in your heart?”

Mr Leung is clear that forgiveness does not mean forgetting but rather choosing not to be held captive by the past.

Reflecting on the hearing process itself, Mr Leung described it as intensive and thoughtful. From his first point of contact and appointment booking, through to sharing his statement and participating in the hearing, he found the engagement thorough.

“The Commissioners asked probing and complex questions for which there were no easy answers at times. They were good listeners.”

The experience surprised him in its emotional depth.

“It was a deeply personal experience, and I found myself opening up in a way that I had not expected.”

He described the experience as both beneficial and therapeutic.

“I strongly recommend that if you were affected either directly or indirectly by the coups, share your experience with the Commission. It will help with your healing and will unshackle you from the past. You might be suffering from trauma without realising it, but telling your story will allow you to move on with your life.”

His message to the people of Fiji is measured yet hopeful.

“You may be a little sceptical about the value of going before the Commission and think it’s not a good use of your time. But I encourage you to keep an open mind and seriously consider being part of making history. Do this for your grandchildren and their children.”

In time, he believes the testimonies gathered will help guide national leadership toward wiser decisions.

“In the fullness of time, I think the testimonies gathered by the Commission will help our leaders plan a better future for the country and not repeat the mistakes of the past.”

For Mr Leung, revisiting what he described as a dark chapter in his professional life brought an unexpected calm.

“Talking about it in a forum like the TRC was a calming experience and will bring me nearer to closure. That has to be a good thing.”

Through resilience, reflection, and a willingness to share his talanoa, he has chosen to transform personal endurance into part of the public record, helping to ensure that Fiji’s difficult chapters are neither forgotten nor repeated.

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 strongerband 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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