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Waveriders hit Biarritz

FIJIAN surfers Che Slatter and Lesi Navuwai are pitting their skills against the world's best at the World Surfing Games in Biarritz, France.

Early results for the duo have impressed Fiji Surfing Association president John Philp.

■ Full report by PRAVIN KUMAR on PAGE 40

Lesi Navuwai and a proud Team Fiji supporter on the beach at Grande Plage during the World Surfing Games in Biarritz, France.

Picture: SUPPLIED/ MARC WEILER

Brain drain

Emigrants remit \$428m, Fiji lacks skilled workforce

By FILIPE NAIGULEVU

WHILE as many as 5000 Fijians emigrate every year, the country is at least earning \$US206m (\$F428m) a year in remittances, the International Labour Organisation report — *A Study on the Future Work in the Pacific* — revealed.

The report estimated at least 23 per cent

of Fiji's population or 204,934 have emigrated. In Fiji, it is estimated that 17,000 people enter the labour force every year, but there are only 600 new jobs in the formal economy with the unemployment rate at 8 per cent of our population.

Most of the Pacific Island countries, the report said, had an oversupply of low skilled workers with considerable skill shortage in

the workforce in technical and vocational, managerial and professional, entrepreneurial and general workplace skills.

Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation CEO Nesbitt Hazelman, said there was a large skills gap in the country that varied in different sectors and industries.

"The brain drain of our workforce has been an issue over some time," he told this

newspaper during the opening of the High Level Tripartite Dialogue on the Future of Work in the Pacific in Suva.

"While there's always an attempt by successive governments to try and stem the migration of these skilled persons, it's something that is very difficult to do as they are looking for greener pastures."

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