



# *Media Release*

## **Nature's Way Cooperative Successful in the first round of the Enterprise Challenge Fund**

**16 October 2008**

Australia's High Commissioner to Fiji, HE Mr James Batley, today handed over a grant of FJ\$350,000 to Nature's Way Cooperative (Fiji) Ltd. Nature's Way is the first company in Fiji to receive support under a new Australian Government program that provides direct assistance to the private sector.

"The Enterprise Challenge Fund is a new, innovative opportunity for business. The Fund seeks to support businesses to stimulate economic growth which is fundamental to reducing poverty in the region" Mr Batley said.

He said the selection process for the first round of the ECF was rigorous and extremely competitive.

"Of the 125 eligible initial concept notes, 29 full applications were considered. Of these, only Nature's Way and one other business were judged to meet all the criteria.

"I am confident that this assistance to Nature's Way Cooperative will help provide new opportunities to farmers in the Western Division to market and sell their produce," Mr Batley said.

Nature's Way Cooperative runs the heat-treatment facility required to meet quarantine standards for the export of fruit and vegetables. The grant will help the company expand its treatment facility so that more fruit and vegetables will be available for export to Australia and other markets such as New Zealand and the United States.

The Enterprise Challenge Fund operates in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands in the Pacific and in East Timor, southern Philippines, Cambodia, Lao PDR and selected provinces of Indonesia.

Through open competition, matching grants of between FJ\$125,000 to FJ\$2 million are awarded to private sector business projects which improve livelihoods and incomes and which generate better access to vital goods and services for the people.

By challenging business to look for new market opportunities, the Enterprise Challenge Fund aims to stimulate growth and to ensure that the poor benefit directly.

ECF funding rounds are advertised bi-annually. The next bidding will close on 30 January 2009.

Further information about the Enterprise Challenge Fund can be obtained from the website: [www.enterprisechallengefund.org](http://www.enterprisechallengefund.org).

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