

Judicial Officers' Fraud and Corruption Workshop

Vanuatu

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Chapter 1: Similarities and differences of provisions across all jurisdictions

This chapter outlines the similarities and differences between fraud and corruption offences across PJIP partner court jurisdictions. The two most prevalent fraud and corruption offence categories defined by the region¹ are: fraud and bribery.

Fraud

In most jurisdictions, the Fraud regime is complex and there is significant overlap with various other provisions. The provisions annexed below are those with which a public officer could be charged, who embezzled public funds. Six jurisdictions (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Republic of Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, and Tonga) have provisions that specifically target fraud or embezzlement by public servants. In the other six jurisdictions, recourse must be had to general provisions (present in all jurisdictions) dealing with fraudulent misappropriation of property. These offences may be variously referred to as “theft”, “cheating”, “obtaining by false pretences”, “obtaining by deception”, or “fraudulent conversion”. Palau is the only jurisdiction to have a specific offence of theft of government property that can be committed by a private individual.

Kiribati and Solomon Islands have identical provisions dealing with the following:

- Frauds and breaches of trust by persons employed in the public service²
- Theft, including taking by trickery or despite knowledge of a mistake on the part of the person defrauded
- Larceny and embezzlement by public servants
- Obtaining by false pretences

Vanuatu has provisions dealing with theft and obtaining by false pretences which are substantially similar to those in the three aforementioned jurisdictions. However, it lacks any provisions dealing specifically with frauds by public servants. The other eight jurisdictions have substantially different regimes.

¹ As outlined in the PJIP Judicial Officer Needs Assessment Survey Report, June 2022

² Fiji has a similarly worded provision



There is a degree of practical commonality among the fraudulent misappropriation or theft offences in all jurisdictions. There are three main elements of which most jurisdictions include at least two. These are that the taking of a thing is done:

- Dishonestly, or by fraud or deceit;
- Without a good faith claim of right (some jurisdictions (Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, and Nauru) merely include the weaker proposition that the property belongs to another); and
- With intent to permanently deprive the owner of the thing.

Kiribati, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu include all three elements; Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa and Tokelau include the first and third; and Papua New Guinea and Federated States of Micronesia include the second and third.

Bribery

All jurisdictions except Nauru focus on bribery in official and political matters, with relevant bribery being bribery of public officials to act in a certain way in the course of their official duties. Nauru, by contrast, focuses on the dishonest provision/receipt of a bribe with the intention of gaining/providing a favour. All jurisdictions address both directions of bribery, that is, provision and receipt. Papua New Guinea and Fiji both have provisions that address bribery of judicial officials. The most detailed provision is that in the Marshall Islands. Fiji also has specific bribery legislation.³

Offence provision/s by jurisdictions

Unless otherwise specified, all references to statutory provisions are to the following Crimes Acts:

- **Federated States of Micronesia:** [Code of the Federated States of Micronesia](#) ;
- **Fiji:** [CRIMES ACT 2009 - Laws of Fiji](#); [Prevention of Bribery Act 2007](#) (For offences committed prior to 1/2/2010 see [Laws of Fiji Chapter 17 \(Penal Code\)](#));
- **Kiribati:** [Penal Code 1977](#);
- **Nauru:** [Crimes Act 2016](#);
- **Palau:** [Penal Code of the Republic of Palau](#);
- **Papua New Guinea:** [Criminal Code Act 1974](#);
- **Republic of Marshall Islands:** [Marshall Islands Revised Code 2014 Title 31 Chapter 1](#);
- **Samoa:** [Crimes Act 2013](#);
- **Solomon Islands:** [Penal Code 1963](#);
- **Tokelau:** [Crimes, Procedure and Evidence Rules 2003](#)
- **Tonga:** [Laws of Tonga Chapter 18 \(Criminal Offences\)](#)
- **Vanuatu:** [Penal Code 1977](#)

	Fraud	Bribery
Federated States of Micronesia	s 601(9) s 602	s 516
Fiji	ss 4, 200, 290, 291, 292, 293, 317, 318, 319(1)(b), 323, 324, 325, 327, 328, 329, 330	s 4, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138 <u>Prevention of Bribery Act</u> ss 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8
Kiribati	ss 121, 251, 266	s 85

³ Prevention of Bribery Act 2007



Nauru	ss150, 153, 166-168, 179	s 173
Palau	ss 2600, 2614, 2615	s 4100
Papua New Guinea	s406, s365 s 383A, s403, s404, s405	ss 87, 97B, 119, 120
Republic of Marshall Islands	ss 223.0, 223.3, 240.7	s 240.0 s 240.1
Samoa	s 172	s 138
Solomon Islands	ss 129, 258, 273, 308	s 91
Tokelau	ss 27, 31, 73(1)	s 72 (1), 72 (2)
Tonga	ss 53, 143, 144, 145	ss 50, 51
Vanuatu	ss 122 , 123 , 124 , 125	s 73



Chapter 2: Vanuatu - Legislative Provisions and Elements of the Offences

Under the two offence categories, the below offences pursuant to the [Penal Code 1977](#), have been identified as falling within the scope of “*corruption*”. Power is used corruptly if it has been “used to obtain some private advantage or for any purpose foreign to the Power”.⁴ For the purposes of this program, “*corruption*” refers to the abuse of entrusted power by public servants, with particular reference to the dishonest pursuit of gain. ALTERNATIVELY: we have used this term in its generic meaning opposed, to its legal connotation.

Fraud: s 122. Theft Defined

- (9) A person commits theft who, without the consent of the owner, fraudulently and without a claim of right made in good faith, takes and carries away anything capable of being stolen with intent, at the time of such taking, permanently to deprive the owner thereof;
- (10) A person shall also be guilty of theft of any such thing notwithstanding that he has lawful physical control thereof, if, being a bailee or part owner thereof he fraudulently converts the same to his own use or the use of any person other than the owner.
- (11) For the purpose of subsection (1) –
- (a) the word "takes" includes obtaining physical control –
 - (i) by any trick or by intimidation;
 - (ii) under a mistake on the part of the owner with knowledge on the part of the taker that physical control has been so obtained;
 - (iii) by finding, whether or not at the time of finding the finder believes that the owner can be discovered by taking reasonable steps;
 - (b) the words "carried away" include the removal of any thing from the place which it occupies but in the case of a thing attached, only if it has been completely detached;
 - (c) the word "owner" includes any part-owner or person having physical control of, or a special property or interest in, anything capable of being stolen.

Fraud: s 123. Misappropriation Defined

A person commits misappropriation of property who destroys, wastes, or converts any property capable of being taken which has been entrusted to him for custody, return, accounting or any particular manner of dealing (not being a loan of money or of monies for consumption).

Fraud: s 124. Obtaining Property by False Pretences Defined

Every person obtains property by false pretences who, by a false pretence, that is to say, any representation made by words, writing or conduct, of a matter of fact, either past or present, which representation is false in fact, and which the person making it knows to be false, or does not believe to be true with

⁴ *State v Gamato* [2021] PGNC 485, 136 (Berrigan J).



intent to defraud, either directly or indirectly, obtains possession of or title to anything capable of being stolen or procures anything capable of being to be delivered to any person other than himself.

Fraud: s 125. Prohibition of theft, misappropriation and false pretences

No person shall cause loss to another –

- (a) by theft;
- (b) by misappropriation; or
- (c) by false pretences.

Penalty: Imprisonment for 12 years.

Bribery: s 73. Corruption and Bribery of Officials

- (1) No public officer shall, whether within the Republic or elsewhere, corruptly accept or obtain or agree or offer to accept or attempt to obtain, any bribe for himself or any other person in respect of any act done or omitted, or to be done or omitted, by him in his official capacity.

Penalty: Imprisonment for 10 years.

- (2) No person shall corruptly give or offer or agree to give any bribe to any person with intent to influence any public officer in respect of any act or omission by him in his official capacity.

Penalty: Imprisonment for 10 years.

- (3) For the purposes of this section, "bribe" means any money, valuable consideration, office or employment, or any benefit, whether direct or indirect, and the expression "public officer" means any person in the official service of the Republic (whether that service is honorary or not and whether it is within or outside the Republic) any member or employee of any local authority or public body and includes every police officer and judicial officer.

Partner Court / Topic	Fraud	Bribery
VANUATU	<i>Penal Code 1977</i> ⁵	
Legislative Provisions	s 122 Theft Defined s 123 Misappropriation Defined s 124 Obtaining property by false pretences definition	s 73 Corruption and bribery of Officials

⁵ The [Leadership Code Act 2006](#) also identifies the duties of leaders, conduct that would amount to a breach of their duties (eg. misuse of public moneys, bribery) and the punishment for these breaches.



	s 125 Prohibition of theft, misappropriation and false pretences	
Elements of the Offence	<p>s 122 Theft Defined</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A takes and carries away anything capable of being stolen 2. A acted without consent of owner 3. A acted fraudulently AND without claim of right in good faith 4. A acted with intent to permanently deprive the owner <p>s 124 Obtaining property by false pretences</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A makes representation (words, writing or conduct) Of matter of fact (can be past or future) 2. A knows it to be false/does not believe it to be true 3. A does so with intent to defraud directly or indirectly 4. A obtains possession of title to anything capable of being stolen OR 5. A procures thing to delivered to any other person 	<p>s 73 Corruption and bribery of Officials</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A is a public officer 2. A obtains or agrees or attempts to obtain a bribe for any person 3. A does so in respect of conduct by A in A's official capacity 4. A does so corruptly <p>ALTERNATIVELY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. X is a public officer 2. A gives or offers or agrees to give any bribe to any person 3. A does so with intent to influence X in respect of any conduct by X in X's official capacity 4. A does so corruptly



Chapter 3: Vanuatu - Elements of the Defences

Under the two offence categories, the below common defences have been identified across each jurisdiction. The **offence** is highlighted by **orange font**; the **common defence** is identified by **pink font** and the **elements of the defence** in **blue font**.

Fraud	Bribery
VANUATU	
<p>Common defences</p> <p>s 17 (age of responsibility)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <10 years = not capable of committing criminal offence - >10 but <14 years = presumed to be incapable unless it is proved by evidence that he/she could distinguish between right and wrong and did so with respect to the offence which he is charged <p>s 20 (insanity)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - accused suffering at the time in question - from a defect of reason, due to a disease of the mind - rendered him incapable of appreciating the probable effects of his conduct - disease may consist of a mental disorder of deficiency which leads in relation to the criminal act to a complete deprivation of the reasoning power of the accused beyond momentary confusion, absence of self-control or irresistible impulse - sufficient if a mental disorder manifested in violence and prone to recur - disease need not be permanent or prolonged – sufficient if a temporary loss of mental awareness <p>s 21 (voluntary intoxication)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - charged with an offence where criminal intention is an element - person intoxicated (which means the impairment of the mental or physical faculties of a person arising from the taking of any foreign substance) - intoxication was of so gross a degree as to deprive the accused of the capacity to form the necessary criminal intention - onus of proof lies on the accused <p>s 22 (superior orders)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - act performed on the orders of a superior to whom obedience is lawfully due (unless such order was manifestly unlawful or the accused knew that the superior had no authority to issue such order) <p>s 23 (self-defence necessity, prevention of offences etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no criminal defence where: 	



<p>(a) act dictated by immediate necessity of defence of the person acting or of another or of any right of himself or another against unlawful action (b) means of defence must not be disproportionate to the seriousness of the unlawful action threatened</p> <p>s 26 (compulsion and coercion) - diminished criminal responsibility if person acts: (a) under actual compulsion of threats (that are not avoidable (of death or grievous harm) (b) coercion of a parent, spouse, employer or other person having actual or moral authority; - no criminal responsibility where person has voluntarily exposed himself to the risk of compulsion, threats or coercion</p> <p>s 27 (provocation) - diminished criminal responsibility if: (a) immediately provoked by the unlawful act of another against the offender or, in his presence, his spouse, descendant, ascendant, brother, sister, master or servant, or any minor or incapable person in his charge - the reaction constituting the offence is not disproportionate to the degree of provocation</p>	
<p>s 122 (theft defined) - No express defences</p> <p>s 124 (obtaining property by false pretences defined) - No express defences</p>	<p>s 73 (corruption and bribery of officials) - No express defences</p>



Chapter 4: Evidentiary issues

From the PJIP needs assessment and ongoing discussions with Partner Courts, the following evidentiary issues were identified.

A summary of the similarities and differences between the jurisdictions are discussed below.

Exceptions to Hearsay – Bankers’ books & business records

In all jurisdictions, there are statutory or common law exceptions to the rule against hearsay evidence. Most jurisdictions (Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Fiji and Papua New Guinea) have statutory provisions pertaining to the admissibility of business records or bankers’ books. In six jurisdictions (Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga) these provisions are framed as exceptions to the rule against hearsay evidence. In Fiji and Papua New Guinea, the relevant legislation contains provisions regarding the admissibility of trade or business records more generally. However, it is likely that hearsay evidence would be admitted pursuant to these provisions.

The Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and the Republic of Marshall Islands have provisions which are almost identical. For the exception to apply to business records, two conditions must be established by the testimony of the custodian of the records, another qualified witnesses or, in the Republic of Marshall Islands only, a permitted certificate submitted to the court. First, the records were kept in the course of a regularly conducted business activity. Second, it was the regular practice of that business to make those records. Similar conditions are required in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga.

In addition to these requirements, three jurisdictions (Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa) specify that witnesses must not be available before the business records can be admitted. In Fiji, the person who supplied the statement in the record must be either dead, unfit to give evidence as a witness, missing or cannot be reasonably expected to have any recollection of the matters dealt contained in the record. Samoa’s legislation contains similar provisions and two additional alternatives. Specifically, that the Judge may consider first, that the witness would not be useful to the proceedings as the person cannot be reasonably expected to recollect the matters dealt with in the record or secondly, it would cause undue expense or delay if the person were required to be a witness.

Papua New Guinea’s provisions specify that the court is not required to admit business records if, having regarding to all of the relevant circumstances, it would not be in the interests of justice to do so. Papua New Guinea also has provisions in relation to bankers’ books; however, the legislation does not specify any rules in relation to admissibility of hearsay evidence.

We have been unable to identify any relevant statutory provisions in Tokelau and Vanuatu. Consequently, in these jurisdictions hearsay contained in business records is not admissible because there is no such exception at common law.⁶

⁶ Further research into the case law will need to be undertaken to determine the position adopted in each jurisdiction.



Expert Evidence

In all jurisdictions, expert opinion evidence is admissible as an exception to the rule against the admissibility of opinion evidence. Generally, expert opinion testimony is admissible at common law if the witness is qualified as an expert by knowledge, skill, experience, training or education and the expert's opinion will assist the court to understand a fact or issue relevant to the matter. Some jurisdictions (Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau and Tonga) have provisions in their statutes or court rules pertaining to the qualification of experts or competency of witnesses more generally. In these jurisdictions, except Tokelau, the common law exception is codified in the relevant statute (Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga) or court rules (Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands).

In the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and Republic of Marshall Islands the specific rules are almost identical. In those jurisdictions, a court may require an expert to disclose underlying facts or data prior to testifying or during cross-examination. Facts or data which an expert relies upon to form an opinion do not need to be admitted as evidence if that evidence is of a type reasonably relied upon by experts in the particular field in forming opinions or inferences upon the subject. Testimony which is admissible is not objectionable if it relies upon a contested fact which is to be determined by the ultimate decision maker. In the Republic of Marshall Islands and Palau, facts or data which are relied on by an expert that are inadmissible do not need to be disclosed to the jury unless the court determines that the probative value of evidence, in assisting the jury to evaluate the expert's opinion, substantially outweighs their prejudicial effect.

We have been unable to identify any relevant statutory provisions in Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Tokelau and Vanuatu. However, it is our understanding that the common law exception exists in all of these jurisdictions.⁷

Evidence Admissible Against Co-Accused Defendants

Two jurisdictions (Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu) contain statutory provisions regarding accessorial liability. We have been unable to identify provisions in nine jurisdictions (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau and Tonga).⁸

Regarding the admissibility of evidence against a co-accused, the common law position applies in most jurisdictions.⁹ At common law, the co-conspirator's rule permits acts or statements of a co-accused in furtherance of a conspiracy to be admissible against a co-accused.

We have been able to identify provisions in five jurisdictions (Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga).

The Solomon Islands and Samoa have provisions which specify that the common law position in relation to the admissibility of statements by co-conspirators prevails. In the Solomon Islands, this is only in relation to confessions. The statute also provides that a co-accused is considered a competent and

⁷ Further research into the case law will need to be undertaken to determine the position adopted in each jurisdiction.

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compellable witness. They may also offer propensity evidence only if that evidence is relevant to the defence raised or proposed to be raised by the accused.

Comparatively, in Papua New Guinea, a person charged with an offence shall not be called as a witness in any legal proceedings in connection with the offence. Notwithstanding this, where a person charged with an offence is a witness they may be asked any questions in cross-examination.

Electronic Evidence

We have been unable to identify any provisions regarding the evidentiary rules applicable to electronic evidence generally in all jurisdictions except for Papua New Guinea and Tonga. In Papua New Guinea, the *Electronic Transactions Acts 2021* specifies that the evidential requirements of admissibility and weight provided by the *Evidence Act* apply to electronic records or data messages. In Tonga, the *Evidence Act* contains provisions regarding the admissibility, standards and authentication of electronic evidence generally.

Some jurisdictions specify that forms of evidence include electronic records or documents stored electronically. The Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and Republic of Marshall Islands specify that writings and records includes electronic recordings. In Samoa, the meaning of ‘documents’ includes ‘information electronically recorded or stored, and information derived from that information’. In Kiribati, the *Evidence Act 2003* contains a provision regarding the ‘[a]dmissibility of statements produced by computers’.

Some jurisdictions have specific evidentiary rules or exceptions in relation to electronic evidence. For example, in the Solomon Islands section 122(1) of the *Evidence Act 2009* provides that the hearsay rule does not apply to a representation contained in a document recording a message that has been transmitted by electronic mail, fax, telegram, letter gram or telex.

Relevance of Evidence

Five jurisdictions (Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Tonga) have provisions in either their statutes or court rules regarding the relevancy of evidence. In all of these jurisdictions relevant evidence is generally admissible.

In the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and Republic of Marshall Islands, relevant evidence is defined as ‘evidence having any tendency to make the existence of any fact that is of consequence to the determination of the action more probable or less probable than it would be without the evidence’. Comparatively, in Tonga, any evidence which is admissible under the relevant provisions is deemed relevant.

Some jurisdictions (Papua New Guinea and Samoa) specify in their statutes that the relevancy of evidence can be questioned during later stages of criminal proceedings, such as during cross-examination or following the end of submissions.



Unless otherwise specified, all references to statutory provisions and rules are to the following:

- **Federated States of Micronesia:**
 - [Code of the Federated State of Micronesia Title 6, Chapter 13 - Evidence](#)
 - [Rules of Evidence for the Trial Division of the Supreme Court of the Federated States of Micronesia](#)
- **Fiji:**
 - [Evidence Act 1944](#)
- **Kiribati:**
 - [Evidence Act 2003](#)
- **Nauru:**
 - [Criminal Procedure \(Amendment\) Act 2020](#)
- **Palau:**
 - [Rules of Evidence for the Courts of the Republic of Palau](#)
- **Papua New Guinea:**
 - [Evidence Act 1975](#)
 - [Electronic Transactions Act 2021](#)
 - [Criminal Practice Rules – Fraud & Corruption Related Offences 2013](#)
- **Republic of Marshall Islands:**
 - [Title 28 – Evidence Act of 1989](#)
- **Samoa:**
 - [Evidence Act of 2015](#)
- **Solomon Islands:**
 - [Evidence Act 2009](#)
- **Tokelau:**
 - [Crimes, Procedure and Evidence Rules 2003](#)
- **Tonga:**
 - [Evidence Act 2020](#)
- **Vanuatu:**
 - [Chapter 136 - Criminal Procedure Code](#)

	Exceptions to Hearsay	Expert Evidence	Evidence Against Co-accused	Electronic Evidence	Relevance of Evidence
Federated States of Micronesia	Rules 801, 802, 803	Rules 601, 602, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706	N/A	Rule 1001	Rules 401, 402, 403
Fiji	s 4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kiribati	ss 32, 33, 34	N/A	N/A	s 28	N/A
Nauru	ss147A, 176	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Palau	Rules 801, 802, 803	Rules 702, 703, 704, 705	N/A	Rule 1001	Rules 401, 402, 403

Papua New Guinea	s61, 91, 92, 93, 94 (Evidence Act)	N/A	s 9, 14 (Evidence Act)	s 12 (Electronic Transactions Act) ss 64, 65, 66, 67 (Evidence Act)	s 26 (Evidence Act)
Republic of Marshall Islands	s3 Rules 803, 902	s3 Rules 702, 703, 704, 705	N/A	s3 Rule 1001.	s3 Rules 104, 401, 402, 403
Samoa	ss 9, 10, 11	ss 2, 16	s 6	s 2	s 70, 83
Solomon Islands	ss 102, 103, 117, 118, 120	ss 24, 30, 129, 130	s 39, 40, 172	s 122	ss 20, 21, 22
Tokelau	ss 163, 175	ss 164, 175	s 175	N/A	N/A
Tonga	ss 88, 89	s24, 25	s 4	ss 2, 54A, 54C, 54D, 54E, 54F	s 14
Vanuatu	N/A	s86	N/A	N/A	N/A

Exceptions to Hearsay – Bankers’ books & business records

There is no specific statute applicable to the *Exceptions to Hearsay – Bankers’ books and business records* for Vanuatu. Common law applies in this instance.

Expert Evidence

Save for the below general provision, there is no specific statute applicable to *Expert Evidence* for Vanuatu. Common law applies in this instance.

86. Report of Government Analyst or Prescribed Expert

- (1) Any document purporting to be a plan made by a surveyor or a report under the hand of any analyst or geologist in the employment of Government or of a medical practitioner upon any person, matter or thing submitted to him for examination or analysis may be used as evidence of the facts stated therein in any trial or other proceeding under this Code.
- (2) The court may presume that the signature to such document is genuine and that the person signing it held the qualification or office which he professed to hold at the time when he signed it.
- (3) When any document is so used the court may, if it thinks fit, summon the surveyor, analyst, geologist or medical practitioner, as the case may be, and examine him as to the subject-matter thereof, or may cause written interrogatories to be submitted to him for reply, and such interrogatories and any reply thereto, purporting to be a reply from such person, may also be used as evidence in such trial or other proceedings.

- (4) Nothing in this section shall affect any other law under which any certificate or other document is made admissible in evidence, and the provisions of this section are additional to, and not in substitution for, any such law.

Evidence Admissible Against Co-accused Defendants

There is no specific statute applicable to *Evidence Admissible Against Co-accused Defendants* for Vanuatu. Common law applies in this instance.

Electronic Evidence

There is no specific statute applicable to *Electronic Evidence* for Vanuatu. Common law applies in this instance.

Relevancy of Evidence

There is no specific statute applicable to the *Relevancy of Evidence* for Vanuatu. Common law applies in this instance.

