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Cook Islands, a Paradise of Untouchable Assets

Taken from the New York Times online

Picture a paradise where you can be lawsuit-proof. A place to hide your hard-earned assets far from the grasp of former or soon-to-be-former spouses, angry business partners or, if you happen to be a doctor, patients who might sue you.

Lawyers drumming up business say they have found just the place: the Cook Islands. And, thanks to a recently released trove of documents, it's become clear that hundreds of wealthy people have stashed their money there, including a felon who ran a \$7 billion Ponzi scheme and the doctor who lost his license in the Octomom case.

These flyspeck islands in the middle of the Pacific would be nothing more than lovely coral atolls, nice for fish and pearls, except for one thing: The Cooks are a global pioneer in offshore asset-protection trusts, with laws devised to protect foreigners' assets from legal claims in their home countries.

The Cayman Islands, Switzerland and the British Virgin Islands capture headlines for laws and tax rates that allow multinational corporations and the rich to shelter income from the American government. The Cook Islands offer a different form of secrecy. The long arm of United States law does not reach there. The Cooks generally disregard foreign court orders, making it easier to keep assets from creditors, or anyone else.

Win a malpractice suit against your doctor? To collect, you will have to go to the other side of the globe to plead your case again before a Cooks court and under Cooks law. That is a big selling point for those who market Cook trusts to a broad swath of wealthy Americans fearful of getting sued, and some who have been.

"You can have your cake and eat it too," says Howard D. Rosen, a lawyer in Coral Gables, Fla., who has set up Cook trusts for more than

20 years, in a video on his website. Anyone with more than \$1 million in assets, his firm's site suggests, should consider Cook trusts for self-preservation, but especially real estate developers, health care providers, accountants, architects, corporate directors and parents of teenage drivers.

International regulators have become more aggressive in efforts to clamp down on tax haven countries, offshore banks and their customers, but they have paid scant attention to the Cooks. Yet Americans are the biggest customers of the trusts, which may be held only by foreigners, not Cook Islanders. The islands' official website calls the Cooks a "prime choice" for "discerning wealthy clients." There are 2,619 trusts, according to the Cooks' Financial Supervisory Commission, offering anonymity as well as legal protections. The value of the assets is not disclosed and it is against the law in the Cooks to identify who owns the trusts or to provide any information about them.

But a cache of documents obtained by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, based in Washington, reveals the owners of about 700 Cook trusts. The Cook data were among 2.5 million documents containing information about customers of offshore havens throughout the world. Earlier this year, the release of some of those documents, disclosing the names of tax-averse companies or government officials and their close allies, caused an international furor.

A close study of the Cook Islands documents by The New York Times and the international consortium shows that these trusts are popular with the wealthy in Palm Beach, Fla., New York and Hollywood. The trust owners include people who have been convicted of Medicaid fraud, Ponzi schemes and bilking employee pension funds.

Many others are simply rich.

The documents described a Cook trust held by Denise Rich, former wife of the disgraced trader Marc Rich, who was pardoned on the last day of the Clinton presidency. Her trust contained more than \$100 million in assets, including her yacht, the 157-foot Lady Joy; a Learjet 60; and a Swiss bank account. In addition, more than \$116 million in assets of the Cordish family of Baltimore, which owns one of the nation's largest privately held real estate conglomerates, were held in Cook trusts.

Cook trusts provide security along with secrecy, officials say. "Asset protection is to provide a layer of insurance for something that cannot be insured — the unforeseeable," said Jennifer A. Davis, chief executive of the Cook Islands Financial Services Development Authority.

There is nothing illegal about setting up a Cook trust, and putting assets into one does not eliminate the requirement to pay taxes on those assets' earnings. But the trusts have a following among those who suspect they could be sued: doctors facing malpractice suits, businessmen avoiding creditors and some who have been sued by the federal government.

R. Allen Stanford, who is serving a 110-year term for masterminding a \$7 billion Ponzi scheme, had a "Baby Mama Trust" in the Cook Islands, named after a mistress with whom he had two children and who was the trust's beneficiary. "Baby Mama" contained proceeds from the sale of a \$2.5 million Florida home — proceeds that were held in Swiss and Isle of Man accounts and are now among 30 offshore accounts subject to a forfeiture order to pay Mr. Stanford's victims.

Lawyers often aim their Cook trust pitches at doctors, many of whom say they fear frivolous malpractice claims. But the trusts can also protect

those who have committed serious transgressions. Dr. Michael M. Kamrava, who lost his medical license after implanting embryos allowing Nadya Suleman, the so-called Octomom, to give birth to octuplets, placed his interest in a Beverly Hills surgery center and a Swiss bank account in his "Athena Trust."

There is also Dr. James Naples, a Texas podiatrist who pleaded guilty in 2004 to federal charges of obstructing justice in connection with treating cancer patients with a pesticide and then billing Medicare and insurance companies. Another Cook trust holder is Dr. Richard Edison, a Fort Lauderdale, Fla., plastic surgeon, called "Dr. Dread," who was sued after five patients at his Florida plastic surgery clinic died and he left a medical sponge in a woman's breast. After the 2004 death of a patient, the Florida health department restricted his medical license.

"There will always be a need for these trusts," said Bernard A. Singer, the Florida lawyer who set up the trust for Dr. Edison. "A lot of people are concerned that we live in a litigious society, and they want to be protected." He added that Dr. Edison voluntarily settled with his patients. He said they never went after the doctor's trust assets, which, documents show, included a \$1.6 million Austrian bank account and was set up after he was sued in the sponge incident.

Denise Rich, ex-wife of the disgraced trader Marc Rich, had a Cook trust worth more than \$100 million.

Critics of Cook trusts say they undermine the basic premise of the American legal system, which is to hold people accountable for the consequences of their actions. "U.S. jurisdiction stops at the Pacific and on the beach," said Jay D. Adkisson, a California

Continued page 14

“Blessed are the peace makers for they shall be called the children of God.”

Jesus of Nazareth



Nelson Mandela

Born 18 July 1918, Mveso, Transkei, South Africa - Died 5 December 2013 (8.50pm) aged 95yrs, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Freedom fighter, political prisoner, President of South Africa, winner Nobel Peace Prize. Died peacefully at home. State funeral.

News Briefs *By TeRiu Woonton*

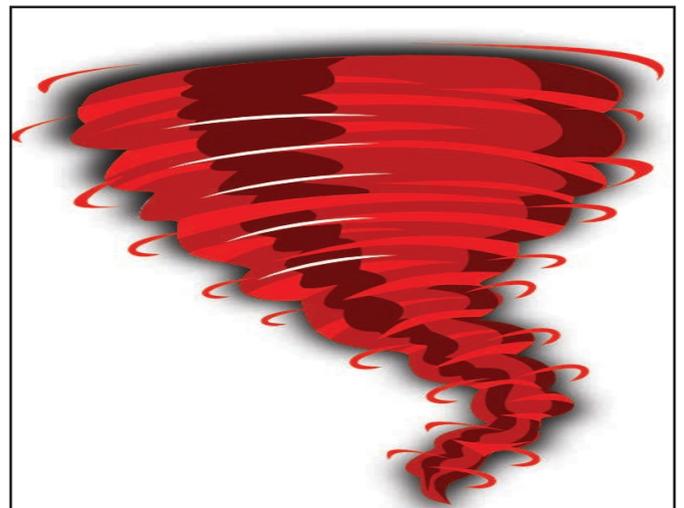
Intake water levels extremely low

In a report from the meteorological service, Rarotonga will not be expecting any rain for the next few days except for brief showers, which is mainly expected to occur in the mountains. Adrian Teotahi from Ministry of Infrastructure says the water levels right now across the island are extremely low. The Northern and Eastern side of the island are at its worst, with the water intake level sitting at 26 to 35%. The Southern part of the islands water intake level is sitting at 46 to 65%. He says the biggest intake which is in Avana is feeding the Southern and Eastern sides of the island and that intake level is at 50%. Adrian would like to remind the public, especially growers to conserve water and report any pipes that are broken. He says those who have water tanks also need to be vigilant during this dry season and conserve water as well. While many people, mainly from Matavera, Tupapa, town and Arorangi have been into the office to order truckloads of water, it is not encouraged for people to make orders late at night, as it is understood that many people tend to make orders afterhours. Adrian says the boys work right throughout the night so he would like to ask those who own tanks to check the tank in the early hours of the morning to see how the water situation is before making an order for water.



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How to stay safe during a cyclone



Keep in mind that a cyclone opener and waterproof bags. can lead to a power cut – When a cyclone hits, sometimes for several days or disconnect all electrical weeks as was the case in the appliances and turn off the Philippines recently. gas. Continue to listen to your

So before a cyclone store portable radio for updates a portable radio, torch, spare and advice. batteries, stocks of fresh water After a cyclone check and canned food, matches, for gas leaks and don't use fuel lamp, portable stove, electrical appliances if wet. cooking gear, utensils, can Beware of fallen power lines.

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Enough talk Agriculture's sickness needs urgent treatment

Last week's release of the Agriculture Census only confirmed what is widely known, the once vibrant foreign currency earner is in such a deteriorated state of health it is unlikely to survive. The thought it was so sick by having it attached to the Minister of Health Glassie it may recover failed so it was dumped on agriculturist the Member of Parliament for Mavera Kiriau Turepu.

Turepu has inherited a lemon no amount of sugar will sweeten. Agriculture has been in decline for more than a decade with many failed attempts to recapture the good old days. In recent times staff morale has been so low hardly anyone turns up for work on Fridays. Even Mr. Agriculture of the Cook Islands the late Robert Wigmore a great success in his own agriculture business couldn't duplicate that success with the Ministry.

Turepu has been in the game since he was a teenager, he knows what's wrong and he now has the cold hard facts and data but is likely to be in the unfortunate position of a Doctor nursing a dying patient. The biggest problem is how does the Ministry fix the problem? Will the fragile life support finally stop under Turpeu's watch?

All the policies and strategic plans along with the proliferation of workshops and overseas trips will not fix the basic problems of Agriculture. Their Public Service Commission (PSC) performance review earlier in the year has been an embarrassment and when the suspension axe was about to fall on the Secretary of Agriculture Dr Matairangi Porea, a sympathetic Cabinet intervened and Patrick Arioka was dispatched from Disaster Management to assist Porea. Not that it will make any difference.

A hobby agriculturist back in the day when agriculture was a thriving industry, John Scott's recent prophetic declaration Agriculture is doomed cannot be scoffed at. Under the guise of tax reform the hired assassins at Ministry of Finance and



Minister Turepu flanked by two ministers who could help fix agriculture

Economic Management (MFEM) have signed Agriculture's death warrant and it is evident no one in the Ministry of Agriculture picked it up, if they had Minister Turepu would have expressed his displeasure in the recent Parliamentary sittings.

Without import restrictions and the failure to offer incentives for import substitution business start ups, imported consumables will be cheaper than that which is locally grown or produced. Why would anyone want to be an agriculturist? The next generation will not know how to grow or produce their own food due to import dependence. What has happened to the aquaculture project in Titikaveka? The well publicized project seems to have quietly lost its way.

The prohibition of innovation and lateral out of the box thinking is a feature of the Cook Islands Party Government almost to the point it's a priority policy. While the potential to have a profitable agriculture industry is undeniable the 'know how' is the missing ingredient. Desks at Ministries across the board are filled with by people with academic qualifications because that's the PSC's requirement but there is a serious lack of practitioner experience thus the unproductivity that is evident. Policies aren't being translated into material reality.

When two Hawaiian orchardists John and Brian turned up in 2009 and bought a four acre property in Aroa the Ministry of Agriculture went out of their way to road block the vision the two practitioners wanted to introduce. What had proven to be an innovative success in Hawaii could have had proportional success here. Their Aroa orchard and the benefits of their creative agriculture insights may be short lived due to their property being on the market. Everyone who has had an audience with the two have been very impressed and mystified why they have to offer has not been embraced or utilized by MOA.

Successive Governments have allocated insufficient budgetary funds to turn Agriculture around and the current one is no different. MOA's poor track record has lost its importance to Cabinet when the budget allocations are debated.

With Food Security being featured in global summits, our ability to grow our own food is at serious risk thanks to the tax obsessive MFEM's undertaker mentality that restricts their ability to see beyond their own box. Minister Brown's haste to express freight the Tax Reforms through the House with limited debate will one day come back and bite the CIP government. With the highly paid Demo Opposition CEO Eddie Drollet failing to

discern the short comings of the tax reforms his Party has missed the opportunity to put the brakes on this issue during the tax debate. To maintain sovereign food security it is fundamental a country has the knowhow, the capacity and the ability to grow its own food.

For the last ten years the pursuit of organic based agriculture has been talkfested till everyone is blue in the face. Yet the MOA is not the focal point for those interested in converting to organics. When will a government make the bold decision and declare the whole Cook Islands chemical fertilizer free and impose bans on such and become an organic state?

We were the first country in the world to declare our EEZ a whale sanctuary under the then Minister of Marine Resources Dr Robert Woonton. Step up to the plate Minister Turepu and make the national organic declaration effective from 1st January 2015. We can be another world first.

Next bold step Minister, direct the Business Trade Investment Board (BTIB) with the responsibility for the export marketing our produce. At least Minister Turepu be more directive at the risk of being accused of interfering with operations, do something bold and innovative, don't let the faint heart beat of MOA snuff out without pounding your fist on its chest. - George Pitt

Te Mato Vai and the sand ice berg

The Te Mato Vai infrastructure up grade project if ever completed will leave no public visible evidence of its existence simply because it is underground. Unlike a building the public can see a tangible result for the expense incurred the TMV is an ice berg investment. The productive result of TMV is clean drinkable water delivered to the public at an expense to the consumer. The house hold metering of water will diminish the popularity and gratitude of the benefits, it will have a sour grape affect.

When it comes to laying the trunk mains around Rarotonga and the inner roads there can be no short cuts if longevity is of any priority. The pipes must be laid to the highest and best quality practice and the New Zealand standards should be the benchmark as Chinese contractors engaged to build the donated Court House for the Ministry of Justice and the Police Headquarters did not adopt New Zealand building standards or codes.

The maintenance for both buildings is costly and continuous. Buildings constructed as gifts from the Peoples Republic of China in other Pacific countries will bear a similar testimony.

What assurances with certainty will we have that the Chinese will not take any, even the slightest short cuts? The evidence of sub standard practices may take several years to manifest and by then the contractors are long gone, liability is unenforceable



Project City - Mechanically screened removed soil before covering the pipes

and Governments have changed thus responsibility ownership is disputed.

Once the pipes have been laid and covered the roads will be resealed and it would be a major aggravation if the road has to be dug up due to poor workmanship. This time the people are paying for the Chinese contractors so it is imperative New Zealand standards are observed and employed.

Nothing less than a set thickness base of sand must be laid then a set thickness of sand must cover the pipes before excavated earth is used to refill the trenching.

The Chinese contractors China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) is expected

to lay up to 61 kilometers of piping. This raises the question of where will the contractors obtain the sand from?

The relaxed attitude to sand mining on private land no longer escapes the attention of the National Environment Service who have developed set of guide lines that are monitored and enforced.

At least 40 kilometers of trenching will yield excavated sand and manual sifting will be sufficient for pipe packing. When Landholdings Limited laid the City project pipes they used a mechanical sifter to re grade the excavated earth for pipe packing.

One meter of pipe will require one meter of sand as packaging. Multiplied by 20 kilometers of

trenching it is estimated seven thousand meters of sand is required. This is equivalent to nearly 1000 big T&M truck loads of sand costing \$90 per meter for a total of \$630,000, serious money.

A lot of sand is needed and it has to come from somewhere. Land owners with sand mining rights ought to engage a competent negotiator to cash in on this opportunity. But then any intelligent contractor would simply stock pile sand excavated from areas close to the foreshore and swap it with excavated inland fill for above the top plate sand packing. This will result in significant savings and reduce the road usage of heavy trade vehicles. - George Pitt

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Historic Income Tax Changes Go Through Parliament

Today, the Parliament passed the most significant series of changes to the Cook Islands taxation system since 1997.

The suite of changes which are designed to improve the take home pay of lower income owners will assist in rewarding hard work, and shift the burden of taxation away from those who can least afford to pay.

Additionally, the Income Tax Amendment 2013 introduced fiscal regime which will govern the taxation regime associated with sea bed mining.

Minister Brown outlined that "The last time taxation rates were modified was over ten years ago, back in 2003 when the threshold was increased from \$6,000 to \$10,000 by the then Coalition Government, who incidentally included the Cook Islands Party."

In outlining the benefits to the community the Minister cited the benefits to workers in the public sector serving the community.

"From the first of January 2014 a nurse will now get an additional \$180 and a school teacher an additional \$185 a fortnight compared to when we were first elected to Government three years ago."

From 1 January the tax free threshold will increase for wage earners will increase from \$10,000 a year to \$11,000 a year, the tax thereafter will reduce from 25 percent to 18.5 per cent, and a new bracket introduced between \$30,000 and \$80,000 of 27.5 per cent as opposed to 30 per cent, and the highest marginal rate will apply at \$80,000.

Updated tax scales will shortly be made available on the MFEM website to assist employers.

Minister Brown outlined the tax reform package was particularly aimed at helping low income earners and improving the incomes in the outer islands.

"The largest relative decrease in taxation will go to those people who earn up to \$30,000 per annum or \$575 a week

before tax. They will now receive almost \$1,500 extra a year in their hand from 1 January 2014 that is a 6 per cent increase in their take home wage."

Other measures which were passed included the removal of the secondary tax provision, the abolition of the withholding tax on interest.

Other changes not related to the income tax changes which will commence from 1 January 2014 are an increase in the personal duty allowance for people entering the Cook Islands to \$750 and the allowance for goods arriving through the post to \$100 regardless of whether it is a gift or not.

The next phase of changes will see the Government introduce legislation in February which will put into effect a series of welfare reforms which will increase pensions by 25 per cent and other welfare payments by 10 per cent from 1 March 2014.

Minister Brown outlined that pensioners including those in receipt of the New Zealand superannuation would all be better off.

"All those pensioners below the tax-free threshold will receive the full 25% increase in their payment. For those over 70 with no other income, that means that they will now receive \$7,500 – the full \$1,500 increase – and continue to pay no tax."

In reference to the inclusion of pensions into the income tax base, the Minister reiterated the issue of equity and fairness.

"A person aged between 60 and 70 who is on \$100,000 a year will still receive the pension. After tax the pension will be \$5,250, in effect a small decrease. However, the same person on \$100,000 a year has also had a personal income tax cut on their other income, meaning that overall they will still have almost \$2,000 extra in their hand from the income tax cuts."

Even if you earn above those incomes you will still get to keep at least 70 per cent of your pension, with the remaining 30



Finance Minister Mark Brown may yet go down in Political History as a reformer

per cent going to support those other pensioners whose incomes are lower.

In February the Government will legislate for all other welfare payments to be increased by ten per cent.

- child allowance will increase from \$ 60 to \$66 a month;
- destitute payment will increase from \$150 to \$165 a month;
- carers allowance will increase from 150 to \$165 a month; and
- power subsidy will increase from \$20 to \$22 a month.

In February the Government will reform the current import levy arrangements and increase the VAT from 12.5 per cent to 15 per cent from 1 April 2014.

In summing up Minister Brown outlined that the package had gone through a tremendous amount of work, he outlined special thanks to those took in the community that took the time to provide an input into the process through their submissions, attendance at

forums and the staff of MFEM and Internal Affairs who had worked hard to put the package together.

"Ultimately, you could say there was ultimate partisan support for this initiative, I welcomed the support from both the leader of the Opposition and Norman George who ultimately could see the good policy approach and the benefits to the people."

"Many people worked on this, but I would like to just outline the efforts of Andrew Haigh and James Webb. In particular, I would like to reflect on the efforts of James Webb. James is a young professional Cook Islander recruited by MFEM who has come back and is contributing positively to the Cook Islands.

Ultimately it is simple we are putting money in people's pockets and that's good for everyone."

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Management will shortly provide material to assist employers with the income tax changes.



Congratulations to Mrs Karen Tairea

Public Health Nutritionist Karen Tairea has been proudly elected as December's Woman of the Month. She has an active involvement with the community, promoting and supporting healthy living as well as organizing physical activities and programs within the villages. Visiting schools and informing students about the importance of the '5+ A Day' concept is one of many duties that she carries out. Karen is also a main resource person for uniform organizations, such as Girls Brigade, and she is supportive of any cultural activities. She was nominated by the Health Promotion Unit, Community Health Services and the Ministry of Health in recognition for her efforts in making a positive impact within the community.

Karen is the daughter of Ramona and James Ash and was born in Auckland, New Zealand. She has one older sister, Gale Sorenson. In the 1969, Karen and her family moved to the Cook Islands (as her father had obtained a job with AB Donalds), and has been here ever since. Her husband is Brian Tairea and she is the proud mother of two beautiful daughters, Selane and Akeina. Karen loves gardening, cooking, listening to music, Zumba, aerobics and trying out new things.

She has received both her primary and secondary

education here in the Cook Islands, Nikao Side School (now known as Avatea School and Tereora College) and was fortunate enough to have gained a government scholarship to study Nutrition and Dietetics at the Fiji School of Medicine. She later on went to complete both a Bachelors Degree in Nutrition as well as a Postgraduate Diploma in Community Nutrition at Otago University. She is also qualified as a Zumba Instructor (Basic Training).

She also attends the Assembly of God Lighthouse Church (AOG) in Titikaveka, as well as the Titikaveka Cook Islands Christian Church.

Karen has been known to take aerobic classes in the community from the mid to late 1990's, for elderly women in Child Welfare clinics in Ruatonga and O'oa, the AOG Church in Ngatangia, Takamoa Theological College, the National Auditorium and, on occasion, the CICC Sunday School Hall in Nikao. She is currently doing one Zumba class at the Papaaroa Hall on Sunday mornings at 7am.

She is also a member of the Cook Islands Breast Cancer Foundation and has been going strong for four years, with three of those years being an executive committee member.

Karen was also a member for the Titikaveka 'Go Local' project, which was developed to promote healthy eating



Congratulations to Mrs Karen Tairea.
Woman of the month of December

and physical activity within the community. Part of this project involved running the Healthy Lifestyle program, which involved Zumba classes at the Kent Hall. She is also a part of the Cook Islands Sport & National Olympic Committee (CISNOC) Potiki Sport Program in 2000. Karen is also a participant in the annual Women in sport 'Walk the Talk' event and partnered with the Women in Sport Committee to deliver the Vaevae Challenge Program. Karen is involved with the Complete Health Improvement Program (CHIP)

committee. This committee delivers a 5 week program (which has just been revised and extended to a 3 month program, starting 2014). The program focuses on helping people make lifestyle changes to improve their health. She is a committee member of the CISNOC Sports Medicine Commission, assisting sports groups to eat healthy and improve sport performance.

Karen is also participating in the Annual Women in Science Expo and is a partner in the Just Play Community Program, which runs once a month.

2013 Woman of the Month Sponsors:

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9. Martha Makimare - Tivaivai Sponsorship
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11. Lydia Sijp – Foot Massage/ Pedicure Session
12. The Flametree Restaurant/Dinner Voucher
13. ANZ Bank/Sponsors Trophy
14. Aunty Kafo- Kafoteria Café – lunch for 2
15. International Olympic Committee - Olympic Solidarity.
16. CISNOC - Women in sport Commission/WOM Organising Committee

Christmas box of cheer

By Norma Ngatamariki

With the festive season fast approaching, families all around are in the midst of preparing for the upcoming Christmas period. Assembly of God (AOG) Church representative and Christmas Box co-ordinator, Vaiana George alongside Life Church representative Mel, presented a total of 186 Christmas Boxes to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (INTAFF), which are to be distributed to the five outer islands of Mangaia, Aitutaki, Atiu, Mitiaro and Mauke. "This itself is a charitable act and a display of generosity towards the community," says Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Bredina Drollet. INTAFF, working in partnership with Westpac Bank since 2008, is also an active participant in the Westpac Christmas Giving Tree project, which also receives a number of Christmas Boxes.

The recipients of the Christmas Boxes will be families who are disadvantaged financially. "This will ensure that everyone will



Christmas boxes ready for this festive season.

experience the festivities to the fullest, as Christmas is a joyous time to spend with family," Vaiana says. She also emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community and that she will be looking forward to next year. "We have expanded this initiative with the hopes of taking it a step further." Vaiana also acknowledged the efforts of her church, the volunteers, Te Aroa Mou Trust as well as the three main banks, Westpac, ANZ and Bank of the Cook

Islands for their sponsorship and support. "We would like everybody to embrace the Christmas spirit of giving and exchanging gifts with one another."

"We made our humble beginnings 12 years ago. From 100 boxes and 20 volunteers to 10,000 boxes and more than 500 volunteers," says Mel Pewhairangi, who co-ordinates the Christmas Box initiative in New Zealand. "It goes to show that there are people out there

who are more than willing to make a difference in a family." Life Church has considered the overall growth within the Pacific and Australia, as they are currently providing Boxes for New Zealand, Melbourne and Rarotonga, and will continually inject cash into the Christmas Box initiative. The Boxes will be given to the Child & Family Welfare Division of INTAFF, who will then distribute the Boxes to the community.

Spend quality time with family

By Norma Ngatamariki

Times are hectic, with Christmas just around the corner. Families are beginning to feel the strain of preparing for the upcoming festivities and dealing with this pressure can be difficult. Rebecca Buchanan from Punanga Tauturu discusses these difficulties with the Herald. "A slight increase in domestic violence cases is to be expected around this time," she says. The main factor which contributes to this is the extra expenses associated with the purchasing of groceries and gifts. "Since families are returning from overseas, it means more spending. This may become a burden for the families here who are already struggling financially." The Herald advises people to prepare a budget and avoid spending more than necessary, as this will help ease

your financial situation.

"Because there are quite a number of unfamiliar people on the island, this can raise a lot of issues as well," Rebecca states. She urges the public to remain vigilant when going through town.

Alcohol and excessive drinking during the season is also an issue which amplifies aggressive behaviour. "It's that time of the year, but please, drink responsibly amongst yourselves," Rebecca says.

To counteract these problems, Rebecca makes a suggestion to spend quality time with family members and establish an understanding relationship between each other. "Talk with your kids and keep tabs on them this season," she says.

On behalf of Punanga Tauturu, Rebecca would like to wish the general public a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.



Rebecca Buchanan

Murienua an endorsement of CIP corruption



James Beer

The Murienua by election on 19 September has sealed the fate of the Cook Islands Party Government. The unprecedented resignation of an election winning candidate in the face of a petition has opened the door for the CIP to be sued and even bankrupted out of existence.

To avoid facing an alleged electoral corruption and bribery petition and possible criminal charges, under the advice of the Prime Minister Henry Puna, Kaota Tuariki within days of the Court hearing resigned from being the winning candidate thus rendering the Democratic Party petition application null and void.

In the minds of the general public at large the Cook Islands Party and corruption have become synonymous. Is history about to repeat itself? Sir Albert Henry was disgraced over electoral corruption and it seems the current CIP Government hasn't thought that through. The suppressed corrupt DNA planted into the CIP had surfaced internally but now has exploded into the public domain.

Evidence the CIP were harboring a corruption virus within its ranks has been

evident by the fact as a Party they do not follow their own rules. Prime Minister Henry Puna's refusal to hold a Party Conference according to their Constitution was premeditated to prevent any challenges to his leadership which will without question end after a challenge at the next conference in August 2014. Puna again ignored the CIP Constitution over the appointment of a deputy leader another cause for the alarm bell ringing.

His pre election pledge to lead a corrupt free government has proven to be empty tin rhetoric. Like former Australian Labour Prime Minister Julia Gilliard, Puna has become a political liability, his leadership is being internally undermined due to his broken promises and this will result in a leadership change sooner than later to attempt to win back lost ground in plenty of time before the next General Elections in February 2015.

The most senior CIP politician Teina Bishop, MP for Nikauapara has a now lengthy investigation for corruption hanging over his head. CIP insiders have suggested Puna has received advice there is sufficient evidence for Bishop to be charged, this gave him the confidence to appoint Teariki Heather his Deputy.

For the Democratic Party to accept the resignation as final is to allow the CIP to make a mockery and a joke of our electoral process and justice system. For the shameless CIP President Rau Nga to audaciously say Tuariki made a noble decision is a reflection of the endorsement of corruption. To the CIP corruption has become the norm and there is no hesitation in endorsing it.

Where is our legal fraternity? Are they so gutless their silence is yellow? Who is going to make a legal stand to ensure this nonsense never gets repeated? Not only is there a question

about Tuariki being corrupt but the Murienua by-election also includes the endorsing involvement CIP Executive members and MPs. Someone with moral fortitude has to step up to the plate and do a 'Vincent and laveta' and restore credibility to the Electoral Act or the rules governing it are rendered worthless and not worth the paper it is written on. Left unattended future elections will be unwinnable by fair means.

The Democratic Party believes they have unchallengeable evidence the CIP candidate acted corruptly to win the Murienua by-election. One thing is also obvious, the CIP have the same belief. This presents the DP with the opportunity to legally pursue a means to have their evidence presented before the Court.

The CIP is an incorporated society that can sue and be sued. The DP has the opportunity to pursue a criminal suit against the corporate body, in this case the CIP. They also ought to file a civil suit against the CIP for all the damages plus all the costs incurred by the DP and their candidate James Beer's expenses during the campaign.

Being an unchartered legal battle where there are no historical points of reference the legal opportunity to make a name for one's self is in the offering. A complaint of corruption against all individuals who managed Tuariki's Election Day indiscretions could do such serious damage to the CIP Government it could be legally tossed out of Governance.

If Henry Puna had a single shred of integrity and moral decency in him he should apologize to the nation and concede the Murienua seat to James Beer. But then if his cruel treatment of the Grey Power pensioners is anything to go by, the rest of us may as well be living on the moon.

- George Pitt

PM may come back to nothing to lead

Since being in office, the VIP lounge at the Rarotonga Airport has become the Prime Minister's second home. Henry Puna is being roasted as the most travelled Prime Minister in the history of Cook Islands self governing and has probably exhausted at least two passports.

A year ago several witnesses at the Rarotonga golf club claim he made a boastful comment about having enough air points to fly first class around the world for two 17 times.

The last 12 months have continued to see Puna soar into the sky to 13 different countries, some several times, often for the purpose of making a keynote speech. (NZ, Australia, New Caledonia, Tonga, USA, France, Belgium, Solomon Islands, Marshal Islands, Hawaii, Japan, China and Fiji)

The Prime Minister left the Rarotonga on Air New Zealand 11 times and spent 124 days abroad, more than 30% absenteeism. His longest trip was for 25 days in February and March 2013.

In 2012 Puna was absent for 92 days making 11 trips to ten different countries, some more than once.

Don't expect Puna's travel addiction to subside because he has completed his one year stint as the Forum leader, he's given himself the Foreign Affairs and Immigration Ministry and like his NZ counterpart McCully will be heading for the airport at the drop of the hat. None of this adding political credit for the Cook Islands Party Government.

Puna may make one trip too many with his leadership on shaky ground he may return one day to find he's been ousted by his own caucus.

These totals did not include an eight day trip to New Zealand in late September on a medical referral. -George Pitt



New Solar Opportunities for Homes and Businesses announced by Te Aponga Uira

Much larger private solar and renewable energy installations can now be connected to the grid in Rarotonga, under a new policy released by Te Aponga Uira this week.

This has been made possible by TAU's extensive investment in modern generator controls at the power station, and detailed analysis of the Rarotonga power grid. TAU has now been able to update its policy for connection of private



renewable energy to the grid to take these improvements into account.

This will assist with the national goal of achieving 100% renewable electricity generation by 2020.

Grid-connected renewable energy now falls into three categories: Net-metering, Gross-metering with a feed-in tariff, and Independent Power Producer. Existing installations may retain their present arrangements, or have the option to transition to the new categories.

Net metering will continue to be available for installations up to 2kW per consumer, allowing energy to be imported and exported on a 'unit for unit' basis. The application and approval process has been greatly streamlined, and the fees for application have been removed.

People wanting to connect larger renewable energy systems can opt for a 'Gross-metering' arrangement, with a feed-in tariff of 45c per unit +VAT. This will allow clients to sell intermittent renewable energy electricity to TAU. Obviously the feed-in tariff is somewhat less than the average retail tariff (78c) charged for diesel-generated electricity, but a margin is necessary to cover TAU's nonfuel costs. The feed-in tariff still offers clients a good return on their investment.

The Gross-metered feed-in tariff is offered for installations up to 7kW single phase, or 21kW three phase.

Applications will also be received for 'Independent Power Producer' installations larger than 21kW. Terms, conditions and feed-in tariff will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis, depending

on the type of installation, the level of intermittency, and hence the value the generated electricity has to the grid.

The new policy is available for download from TAU's website, www.teaponga.com. Application forms for Grid Connected Renewable Energy will be available from TAU's office in Avarua.

TAU will also shortly be commissioning further large solar installations of its own, and will be calling tenders for contractors to supply and install the equipment, to be advertised in the coming weeks.

The expanded scope of connection of renewable energy into the grid has come about after considerable work by TAU on how to manage large amounts of distributed generation, while still maintaining grid stability. New controls for power station

generators have been installed, which improve voltage and frequency management, and response time.

Engineering analysis has been carried out on sections of the grid which will be impacted by large distributed generation connections, so that TAU can be sure that power quality and protection is maintained under worst-case scenarios. And technology has been identified which will dramatically reduce the operational cost of 'spinning reserve' engine capacity needed to manage the variability of solar power.

As further upgrades to TAU's generation and network equipment are completed, the future is bright for the connection of more distributed renewable generation, to replace our dependency on diesel fuel.



Demos committed to fixing Toagate



The Toa Petroleum Fuel plant located opposite the Airport.

Grieved the incoming Cook Islands Party has failed to find a legal means to rectify the Toagate debacle the Democratic Party Opposition leader Wilkie Rasmussen is tabling a private members Bill in Parliament to kick start the process that will lead to legislation that if passed in the House will save the country \$120,000 a month. The legislation will see the Crown's payments to businessman Brett Porter terminated. Rasmussen says the Opposition has made it clear to the Government they will support any effort to pass appropriate laws to end TOA Petroleum's Government eight year guaranteed trading profitability.

Rasmussen says there is a way by which Government can end Porter's special deal but they have focused on all the possible litigation Porter's legal team would mount against Government should his lucrative arrangement be tampered with. "The Minister of Finance Mark Brown and his Finance Secretary have passively accepted a defeatist attitude rather than make the sternest effort to save the country more than \$5 million for the remaining five years."

"This Government would rather spend the next five years reminding the public Toagate

was a Demo problem they have inherited, they are prepared to take this politicking posture of self righteousness rather than save the country that unnecessary expense that could be channeled into Health or Education," said Rasmussen.

Rasmussen said as the current leader of the Democratic Party he accepted the responsibility for Toagate and the best way to apologize to the public is to actively pursue a solution. "Words are cheap and cost nothing, our sincere regret is reflected in our efforts to rectify our mistake. We have waited for Government and were willing to support them but they have found Toagate too hard to deal with."

Rasmussen said the intent was right, at the time when global fuel prices were spiraling through the roof the Democratic Government was committed to implementing a fuel saving solution. Samoa had been visited by the Chairmen of Te Aponga and the Cook Islands Investment Corporation to observe the model they had adopted for six years and met with the Australian consultants, the architects of the Samoan business model. Later a delegation led by the then Deputy PM Sir Maoate visited Samoa on a similar fact

finding exercise.

Cheaper fuel by way of Government being the sole importer (The Samoa model) was the intent, by cutting out all the middle men the cost savings were to be passed onto the consumers, an anticipated political winner for the Democratic Party.

While there was maximum political will for Government to enter the fuel import business the lack of business acumen within the Political arm and the collaborating Ministries and no legal peer review insured Government was committing itself to a disaster of their own making.

While a good measure of the blame could be attributed to the officials Rasmussen said leadership must accept the blame and the moral responsibility to correct the mistakes. Had someone within the decision makers had the insight to pick up the phone and call Laveta Short to review the contract before it was hastily signed how different the outcome would have been.

"We simply fell down in the application of our intent," reflected Rasmussen. Unlike Samoa who tenders the management of their fuel farm every five years the Democratic Government didn't adopt a transparent contestable

process for the management of their new commercial venture but signed a one sided contract with the business savvy Brett Porter, hardly Porter's fault.

Any admiration Porter received for having struck gold because he's a smart operator has turned sour. The growing public perception is he seems to have effortlessly reestablished his business on a new site and despite these stagnant economic times Porter is expanding into new businesses and still collecting the \$120,000 of tax payer's money. Still grieved are the people are owed money as a result of Porter's collapsed PDL Ltd import wholesale and retail business. Promises he publically made to pay outstanding debts are yet to be honored and when these people see Porter driving his new expensive pick up and expanding into new businesses hostile emotions surface.

"If this Government continues politicking Toagate as a diversion from their many self inflicted derailments then we will fix this as soon as we become the Government. At \$23,000 a week every day is one day too many, it will be the first item on our agenda at our first Parliamentary sitting," asserted Rasmussen.

- George Pitt

Tupapa win Champion of Champions in nail biter!



The build up couldn't have been better. The Titans and Tupapa had met twice this season, each recording a win. In some respects the Titans had the upper hand having beaten Tupapa comprehensively by 80 runs the weekend before in the East versus West final.

But Saturdays match was different - it would determine unequivocally which team was the best on Rarotonga. It would decide the The Computer Man Champion of Champions.

Titans skipper Hori Miller won the toss and elected to bat, that made sense; the strategy had worked for him the week before with early runs putting pressure on Tupapa.

However the Titans faulted early when they lost Miller second ball of the innings. Incoming batsmen Corey Fisher did what he loves best and put wood to leather booming 26 runs from 7 balls. Pastor Zekaria contributed scoring 34 runs and Mark Larsen chimed in with a-run-a ball 19 however it was Chauncey Flay who was the Titans player of the day. Flay never

looked troubled by the Tupapa bowlers and he used his ability to play the ball all over the park to collect continuous boundaries and showed great courage to reach a brilliant century in a big occasion. Wayken Punga was the only bowler to survive Flay's onslaught as the national player put the brakes on an already mounting Titans total conceding just twenty runs from four overs. However the damage had been done as Flay lead the Titans to a mammoth 227.

Punga and Osolai Akai opened the batting for Tupapa. Despite losing Punga early Akai was hitting the ball cleanly from the other end. Two quick wickets for the Titans swung the momentum back into the Titans favour. However most present were well aware that Tupapa had plenty of talented batters left in their line up.

Akai was joined at the crease by national player Patiamai Ataala and the two quickly built momentum until Akai's solid innings of 62 was ended when caught off the bowling of Zekaria. Paaka Daniels stay at the

crease was short and sweet as he bought up a half century which included just four singles, the rest by way of boundaries.

Flay was doing his best to keep a lid on the Tupapa batters conceding twenty runs from four over's and despite strategically brilliant field placing by Miller runs were coming thick and fast for Tupapa.

Ataala battled away at the other end, treating the crowd to a master-class in batting as he showed every inch of his class stroking the ball all round the Turangi Oval. The real sense a Tupapa victory was on its way in the 17th over, until Daniels was caught off the bowling of Kieran Thorpe. The Titans were inching closer to victory but had one more obstacle in their way, Toala Teinaki.

The national and Tupapa skipper walked to the crease to huge cheers from the Tupapa crowd. Teinaki played it cool and pushed for the single to feed the strike to Ataala and within a blink it was here, the last over. A season of blood sweet and tears from two tough opponents. Twelve runs from six balls was

all Tupapa needed to take the Champion of Champions title however the Titans vocal crowd sensed that if either Teinaki or Ataala were dismissed early in the over the game could just as easily go the way of the Titans. For the first time that day the crowd was hushed, Cutsy came in to bowl and Ataala attacked hitting the ball over mid wicket for six. The Tupapa crowd celebrated, the Titans urged their players on with plenty of encouragement, the game wasn't won yet. 6 runs from 5 balls is a lot in a big occasion and they don't get any bigger than a Champion of Champions final. Cutsy gets set and comes in to bowl, Ataala pressed forward and hit the ball straight back down the ground for a match winning six. The Tupapa crowd erupted and together with team mates rushed the field to celebrate the The Computer Man Champion of Champions title victory with their captain Teinaki and Tupapa's man of the day Ataala. A nail biter of a finish to a greatly contested final by two great sides.

Mauke Cricket Booming!



The small island of Mauke is right into their cricket! Two years ago the island of Mauke held a loosely collaborated senior competition however after two recent development visits the hardworking volunteers and passionate cricketers of Mauke are getting right into the action. The small island is so keen on their cricket that they now boast sixteen teams, four in each category of senior mens, senior womens,

U17's and U10's.

Volunteers, players and parents from around the island even turned out for umpires and coaches courses run by the Association. The island already has a strong presence of Mauke based cricketers on Rarotonga, some of which represent the country in the womens national team. Something that the Maukean people are very proud of.

Benedicta Matapo is leading the charge for the senior cricket competition while junior cricket is being run by Teata Atearano. The island is into their second week of The Computer Man Men's, Edgewater womens and ANZ competitions. With Manea games right round the corner and only a near miss from gold at the last Manea games the women in particular will have their eyes set on gold this time round.

Letter to the Editor

Come on Prime Minister-give us a Christmas present

Dear Editor
Listening to Mark Brown's speech in parliament last week, he made me sick how he went on about having to look after the old pensioners in giving them more money in their benefits.

I thought to myself, what about the Grey Power? They are old pensioners too. How come he doesn't want to look after them too? All he wants to do to the Grey Power is to back tax them.

He doesn't even mention he is going to make the Cook Island pensioners pay tax. I don't know how he can sleep at night when he collects \$2,000 to \$3,000 a fortnight. Shame, shame on you like Napa said in parliament, give with one hand and take with the other. Is Richard Neves the Prime Minister?

How come our Prime Minister can't do something? This government loves themselves not their people. If he had done something like forget about the Grey Power two year's back tax, then I'll know he loves his people. I will look forward to that day. Come on Prime Minister, you are head of the country. Give us a Christmas present in your speech. I will look forward to hearing your speech when you give one.

I will be very upset if you don't. Looking forward to that.

Grey Power, one voice, one choice.

The case of the waterless free water tank

In this day of a drastic water shortage, one clever household has been filling their water tank at home with water from the free water station at O'oa.

This has upset O'oa locals and also the local MP who has been filling the tank and paying \$60 for the fill.

However, one household has been driving their white pickup loaded with big drums up to the O'oa water station at night and filling up. The local MP was mystified as to why the O'oa water tank had run out but noticed the tell tale trail of spilled water from the pickup on the road. The local MP followed this trail of water right to the house the pickup came from.

It seems these residents cannot afford to pay \$60 to have water delivered to fill their tank at home so they have been helping themselves to the free supply at O'oa.

One angry local has suggested the MP lock off the taps at 7pm each night to prevent further taking of very large quantities of water.

The free water stations are intended for households to fill containers with drinking water not large drums to fill home water tanks.

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Sunday at 10.30am

Cook Islands, a Paradise of Untouchable Assets

From page 2

lawyer and critic of offshore trusts. "Nothing will happen. That's why those with Cook trusts include a high number of the unscrupulous who have committed fraud and are trying to hide their ill-gotten gains."

Even the United States government has had a hard time going up against a Cook trust. In a lawsuit that has dragged on for years, Fannie Mae, a government-sponsored lender, is still waiting to collect on a \$10 million judgment against an Oklahoma developer who defaulted on his loans. In legal filings, Fannie Mae says it has collected only \$12,000 — and "that is not for lack of trying." The "clear purpose" of the trust, Fannie Mae's complaint said, "is to avoid payment of the judgments obtained by Fannie Mae," efforts that the agency called "brazen."

The Federal Trade Commission, as well, has come up dry. In 2007, the F.T.C. won a \$37.5 million judgment against Kevin Trudeau for "airing blatantly deceptive infomercials" for his diet book "The Weight Loss Cure," but has collected nothing so far. Mr. Trudeau, who lives in Chicago, had been jailed for contempt over his refusal to testify about his Cook Islands trust and other offshore accounts. The government claims Mr. Trudeau "uses sophisticated asset-protection devices designed to defeat the jurisdiction of American courts."

"The whole purpose of the legal system is accountability," said Jack A. Blum, chairman of Tax Justice Network USA, a nonprofit that campaigns against tax havens. "It's the idea of being outside the rule of law: that you can put money into a trust, do something wrong and not have to worry about answering in court for your actions. It's a way of making that money disappear. It's not nice and it's not right."

Americans have parked approximately \$1 trillion in offshore accounts around the

world, and the United States government has begun to make an issue of it. But the Cooks, a self-governing state associated with New Zealand, have gotten little attention from American regulators or legislators so far, perhaps because the islands do not appear to have been widely used by multinational corporations to avoid paying taxes and because they have not been linked to terrorist financing or money laundering.

In August 2012, Hillary Clinton became the first secretary of state to visit the islands. Her public remarks on the main island, Rarotonga, did not contain a word about the trusts. A Congressional Research Service study on tax havens released in January cited offshore trusts, in the Cooks and elsewhere, as possible conduits for evading taxes, with little follow-up.

"There's been a lot of pressure on the Caymans and other places to clean up," said Heather Lowe, director of government affairs at Global Financial Integrity, a Washington research and advocacy group. "There are many areas where pressure is not exerted, and the Cooks is one of them. Using a Cook trust to hide assets from your spouse may not make the headlines."

Given the Cooks' success in attracting money, a number of other countries — about 25 and growing — and about 14 states have developed some form of asset protection law. In the United States, the first was Alaska, which enacted an asset protection statute in 1997. Delaware followed, along with South Dakota, Nevada, Wyoming and others. Many domestic trusts, however, have been broken open — "pierced," in legal parlance — allowing creditors who win judgments to tap into the assets. Most other countries' asset protection laws are not considered as tough as those of the Cooks.

For the islands, the trust business has been a bonanza. The Cooks have

Continued on page 18

The **COMPUTER MAN** Tech Tips

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Introducing Windows 8

Windows 8 comes with a new user interface called the Windows Start Screen that is the first thing you see when you login to Windows 8. This is the main interface that Windows 8 user's use to launch applications, search for files, and browse the web. This Start screen contain tiles that represent different programs that you can launch by clicking on the title. One of the features of this new interface is that the tiles themselves are able to show you real-time information directly on the Start screen. This will allow you to use the Start screen not only as a way to start an application, but also as a way to quickly see data such as the weather, e-mail information, new RSS feed articles, etc. For example, the weather tile will not only allow you to launch the main Weather application, but will also display your actual weather conditions directly on the Windows 8 Start screen.

Using the Windows Start screen

The Start Screen is a very simple interface to navigate. When you first install Windows 8, your start screen will be comprised of various Apps designed for the Start Screen as well as programs that you can launch from the classic Windows desktop. Each of these programs or Apps are represented as a tile. These tiles can be configured to display as a small square or a rectangle. If the title is set to be the square, then it will just act as a program launcher when you click it. If you make the tile into the rectangle, though, then this tile will display real-time information, if available, from the application directly onto the start screen.

The Start screen also has numerous pages, where each page contain different tiles. Therefore if you run out of room on one page, then you can simply start adding tiles to other pages. To organize your tiles based on how often you use them, or by a particular category, you can move the tiles between groups or pages and even create brand new groups of tiles.

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Community Health Services- Public Health Department
PO Box 109 Tel: 682 29 110
Rarotonga Fax: 682 29 100
Cook Islands Website: www.health.gov.ck

11.12.2013

ESR Stakeholders Report – November 2013

The ESR Unit, Community Health Services, with the assistance of the Acute Emergency doctors, has been involved with the Hospital Based Active Syndromic Surveillance of the diseases/conditions mentioned below, and reporting them weekly and monthly to WHO. Cases reported from the hospital to Public Health are on a weekly basis.

Figure 1: Syndromic Surveillance Week 45-48.

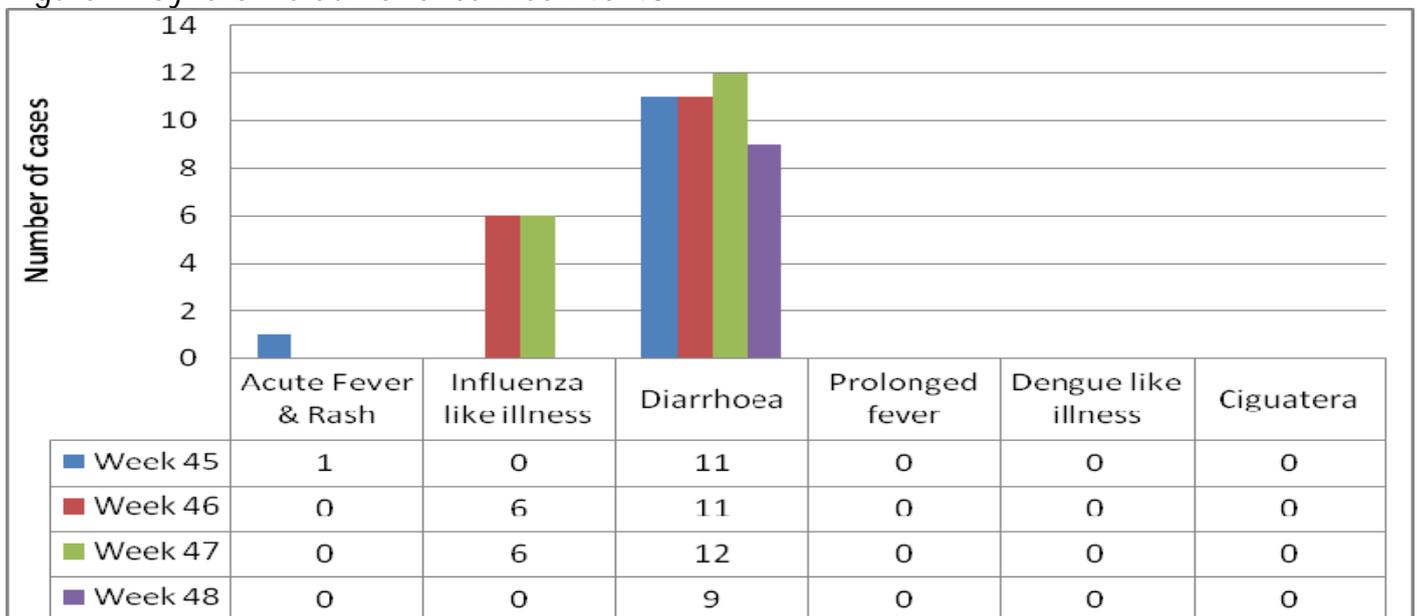


Table1: Cumulative number of cases reported for the month of **November 2013**.

Syndromes	Cases	Advice
Acute Fever & Rash (AFR)	1	<i>Diarrhoea:</i> Hand hygiene and good sanitation in the home is vital to prevent the spread of germs. Boil drinking water or buy/collect from safe, treated water stations.
Influenza-like illness (ILI)	15	
Diarrhoea	43	- See doctor if not feeling well
Prolonged Fever	0	<i>ILI:</i> Practice good hand and respiratory hygiene (proper cough/sneeze etiquette)
Dengue-like illness (DLI)	0	- Stay away from people who are obviously sick.
Ciguatera	0	<i>DLI:</i> We have no DLI cases reported but due to the dengue and Zika outbreak in French Polynesia, Public Health is continuing with the monitoring of all incoming flights from Tahiti. Also take extra precaution when travelling to Tahiti. Use mosquito repellents and see doctor if not feeling well
		Signs & symptoms of Zika: = Skin rash and fever over 38°C, Conjunctivitis, Body and/or muscle aches, and oedemas (excess fluids) of the hands and/or feet.

Cyclone Pat recovery report slams MOIP

By Charles Pitt

A report commissioned by government on the recovery work following Cyclone Pat in Aitutaki was completed on 13 September 2013 but was not released to the public possibly because it presents a damning case against the Ministry of Infrastructure and Planning (MOIP).

Local Consultants, Akairo were commissioned by the Development Coordination Division (DCD) of MFEM to produce the report.

Some interesting facts come out of the report. There was an underspend of NZ funds of \$597,074 but no indication of what happened to this and why it was not used to repair those homes which are still unrepaired.

The report discloses that audits were done by the Audit Office of MOIP's operating budget and that KPMG were commissioned to conduct an audit of MOIP project activities. The Herald understands that these audits have been completed but just when the findings will be made public, is not known.

Set out below are extracts from the consultant's report.

Executive Summary.

Cyclone Pat hit Aitutaki on February 10, 2010 and left a trail of devastation to 78% of the houses, critical services, food crops and personal property. Emergency personnel and equipment were immediately mobilised to attend to the safety and security of the people of small island.

A multi-agency Aitutaki Recovery Committee was established by the Cook Islands Government to coordinate the recovery phase and to implement the Aitutaki Recovery and Reconstruction Plan. This committee focused on restoring the community of Aitutaki to a state of normality as soon as possible.

The Cook Islands Government assigned \$2.7m from its outer islands budget to re-establish essential services and infrastructure support, and to enable businesses to resume immediate operations so that the locals could assist with the recovery efforts.

The relevance of the project was demonstrated through its alignment to Cook Islands priorities and NZ policy mandates. New Zealand tailored its support for the Recovery Plan with a total package of \$6.4 million. This focused on 10 key activities – Emergency repairs to the hospital and schools (\$297,384); Schools (\$299,914); Evacuation shelters (\$74,219); Collecting debris (\$40,497); Category Three and Four

housing (\$3,030,000); Schools resourcing (\$100,000); A new Warning System (\$65,000); Sanitation (\$480,000); Disaster Risk Management (\$20,000); and Solid Waste disposal (\$365,000).

The effectiveness of the project is evidenced by the island's return to a state of normality and the objective to build back better provided more strongly built domestic buildings and the return of the environment back to a state of economic potential for tourism. The only outstanding activity from the project is the removal of two containers of asbestos from the island. The appointment of a Clerk of

Works by MFAT to work alongside the PMT was a successful strategy that resulted in an "environment that provides the highest level of resilience the island has ever had" (Scantlebury, 2011). The effectiveness of the management of the project was often marred by poor communication from MOIP, the Rarotonga-based implementing agency. Implementing a project communication strategy and delegating decision making authority to the local level on island should be considered for future similar projects.

Although the overall efficiency of the project was adequate across all ten (10) activities of the project, delays to the construction programme were unnecessarily caused by poor preparation of tenders and quantity surveying by MOIP. These were compounded by sea transport issues and hefty air freight costs. Donations were received by the Island Council in the form of materials (for example, 20 tonnes of sheeting was donated by James Hardie Ltd) and monetary donations from families and friends which resulted in their purchase of nearly \$60,000 worth of tools for use (and later purchase) by local workers. However, a further \$0.9m of NZAP was still required to complete the works on the Category Three and Four houses.

Overall, the project has had a positive impact, by minimising the outward migration of residents, stimulating the local economy and improving the private and public physical infrastructure. The visual impact of the island has been enhanced contributing to economic returns through an increase in tourism activities on the island. There is little information available on the benefits of the project for marginalised groups as well as women and children.

The sustainability of the project was encouraged by the use of local suppliers and local labour. Local workers earned status through their involvement in

rebuilding their communities. Their increased ownership strengthened social and community connections. At the end of the project, workers obtained a Certificate of Employment and were able to buy their tools to enhance their future employability within the building industry. The project team reported that this activity was in itself a healing therapy both for individuals as well as for communities. Householders were noticeably showing pride in the care of their improved properties. Institutional processes are required to ensure adherence to building codes and waste management practices are better organised. The income generated from the sale of the waste material has been returned to the Island Council to fund future waste removal activities.

Risks to the project were managed through a number of measures. Environmental risks were managed by employing a private contractor to remove a huge amount of solid and hazardous waste across the island. Institutional risks relating to communication issues and the capacity of the lead agency on Rarotonga, were to some extent mitigated by the closer relationship built between the Project Management Team, the Island Council and Island Administration personnel with their direct communication with the Aitutaki Recovery Committee. The potential of socio-economic risk to the island was mitigated by urgent attention given to re-establish businesses and the immediate clean up of the environment. The initially inexperienced local workforce was given a 12 month on-the-job training course in all aspects of the building trade.

Overall, financial management processes could have been better coordinated and systems developed between the implementing (on Aitutaki and Rarotonga) and aid coordinating agencies to ensure timely and accurate processing and reporting of expenditure. The total cost of the Repair and Recovery Project was \$5,439,940 of the \$6,400,000 allocated, realising an underspend of \$597,074.

Overall and in general terms, we conclude that the project was able to deliver its outputs and activities according to agreed timeframes and within approved budget allocations.

It is recommended that consideration be given to conducting a post project evaluation to ascertain the impact and sustainability of the project particularly in relation to its impacts for marginalised groups including women and children.

Continued next page

Efficiency

The efficiency of the project is demonstrated through a number of measures. The ARC and CIGov already had a policy of maximising the economic benefits of the reconstruction effort. Local businesses were encouraged to bid for the supply of materials. Their quotes were assessed alongside those from NZ and Australia. Local workers were employed for reconstruction, and there was a significant element of upskilling and training provided on the job. Using local businesses, suppliers and the Aitutaki workforce were aimed to help achieve the goals of the Recovery Plan.

The goodwill of suppliers of goods and services assisted construction activities. James Hardie Ltd donated approximately 20 tonnes of 6mm and 9mm sheeting; Hitachi, Paslode and Powertool Centre gave generous discounts which brought in about \$60,000 worth of equipment which was purchased by the Island Council and subsequently by individual workers at the end of the contract; and AirNZ and Air Raro assisted with discounted or free freight getting the urgent goods to the island.

The CIGov has stringent tender requirements for procurement of public-funded goods which involves oversight of the process by the Tender committee and public notification of the opportunity to bid. For this project however, the ARC agreed to streamline the process somewhat so that the tender process should apply to 80% of all materials funded by MFAT. This enabled the immediate purchase of the bulk of the material required to address the repair to emergency services. This new procurement strategy was seen to provide enduring economic and social benefits.

There were several instances where issues related to timeliness and procurement created delays to the arrival of equipment for construction work. A key issue was related to the quality of the tender specifications which resulted in inaccurate calculations of materials. E.g. Timber post brackets where procured by MOIP and shipped to the Project Management team but were not part of the design specifications and were not used. Managed out of Rarotonga, MOIP had the responsibility to tender supply packages for materials on a cost insurance freight basis. They had the responsibility to quantity survey the materials required and to manage the contracts for supply.

The Aitutaki based Project Management team were rarely spoken to with regards to material selection or supply expectations. One example was when a contract was awarded for windows to a supplier in Rarotonga whose bid was cheaper than that of an Aitutaki supplier, but which subsequently cost significantly more as the quote had not included additional items, such as screws, bolts, etc. The employment generated by this job for the effected population and local business in Aitutaki should have been taken into account. Sea transport is not reliable at the best of times, so that when inaccurate calculations

were made and material was having to be transported from NZ to Rarotonga and then to Aitutaki, these created further delays. As a consequence in meeting timelines, they also created additional costs when air freight was used to get urgent materials to the island.

In managing the production delays of septic tanks by a local manufacturer, MOIP decided, without consultation with the PMT to install an alternative septic system in nine of the new Category 4 houses. Unfortunately they neglected to tell the householders that the tanks required an electrical connection. When householders found out, some asked for its removal because they did not want a system that had any additional running costs, especially as the connection became the responsibility of the householder and several of them were unemployed. One year down the track, three of the households have still not connected the system to a power source. Left unattended this will impact on the effectiveness of the system and could pose health concerns for those householders.

While financial records show savings overall, financial monitoring during the MOIP-related activities was not satisfactory especially after the MOIP financial officer who was supposed to be stationed in Aitutaki moved to another job. His position was not filled, so it became another project team members responsibility as well as his own placing added burden to his workload. This was evidenced by repeated disputes between MFEM and MOIP in the ARC meetings over whose financial report was correct. The PMT experienced frustrating communications with MOIP, emails frequently not responded to, requests for further information and procurement options were often ignored or deferred, phone calls were not returned, unilateral decision making (by MOIP head Office) regarding project matters, wages calculations, erratic timeliness of payments to suppliers, and general difficulty with communication, were perennial issues for the PMT.

In preparing this report we note that the completion reports by the various project implementers provided a range of financial reporting styles: basic income and expenditure statements (1 report); some reconciliation according to the agreed budget (6 reports) or no financial information (3 reports). The basic expenditure statement was from the Island Administration for the clean up of the island. MOIP provided no formal financial statement for Category 3 and 4 houses, the sanitation project, and the waste disposal contract with RCI. The lack of ability to provide a financial report, particularly for the private contracts, demonstrates poor contract administration practice. Although the containers of asbestos remain on the island, the contractor has reported that now that the Cook Islands Government has agreed to underwrite the insurance cover of its transport to NZ, the activity will soon be completed. This was delayed due to time taken to develop and

assess proposals for burial on the island, disposal at sea and then arranging for legal disposal in NZ at a certified hazardous materials facility.

The lack of financial documentation from the Lead Implementing Agency during this project, MOIP, continues to be a concern. The Head of Administration at MOIP has stated that they have the information, and that it was made available to the Auditors who recently visited the Ministry (August 12, 2013).

AMD statements indicate that all sub-projects were completed within budget with a residual budget figure of \$597,074 remaining. There is a discrepancy between AMD and MOIP records of \$5,359.87. The other government agencies recorded their expenditure against the agreed budgets of their contract and delivered accordingly.

Cook Islands Audit Office has undertaken an Audit of MOIP operating budget and KPMG have been commissioned to conduct an audit of MOIP project activities. These reports were not available at the time of preparing this Activity Completion Report. Therefore while we are able to draw financial conclusions they are subject to the KPMG Audit report findings and Cigov response.

On this basis we conclude that the project could have been more efficient in its implementation. Procurement resulted to a small extent in some waste and missed opportunities to directly benefit the Aitutaki economy. MOIP contract administration and financial management reporting to the PMT was inefficient. As a result financial reports to ARC were delayed and disputed. This contributed to undermining trust between Cook Islands management groups and development partners in efficient delivery of activities.

Impact

Overall, the project has had a positive impact. The project was able to minimise migration of residents, stimulate the local economy and improve private and public physical infrastructure. The visual impact of the island as a result of the new buildings and the removal of debris has been a very positive outcome of this project. This has had a positive impact on economic returns for the island of Aitutaki. Tourism has taken advantage of this by the increased number of events that have been held on the island since the cyclone, thereby increasing visitor numbers. New school buildings, classroom furniture and teaching resources have also created an inviting environment for students and teachers. The growing school rolls indicate that the security and cohesion of island family life has now been resumed.

Another positive impact has been the enhanced employability of the young male workers. This has been significantly improved due to what was effectively a 12 month onsite training course with all workers (102) receiving a Certificate of Employment that details their individual work period and job description. They also have added capacity

Continued bottom page 18

Cook Islands, a Paradise of Untouchable Assets

From page 2

a stable government and a sophisticated judiciary based in English common law. Business generated by the trusts — registration fees, taxes on trust companies and their employees, and various support services — accounts for just above 8 percent of the \$300 million Cooks economy, after tourism and ahead of fishing. Cash and investment accounts, along with real estate and businesses, are typically registered in the trusts. None of the items have to be physically located in the Cooks, and business can be conducted electronically.

The Cooks law was written with Americans in mind. In fact, it was drafted by a Denver lawyer, Barry Engel. A Cook official, seeking revenue

for the islands, read in The Economist about Mr. Engel's firm, which was pioneering the concept of asset protection trusts, and hired Mr. Engel to help write the 1989 law.

"Lawyers can debate the morality of these trusts," said Mr. Engel, who has established more than 1,300 Cook trusts. "My first duty is to my clients and my clients have a need. This is in response to a legal system that has spun a little out of control and is abused by lawyers for legal extortion and who can throw someone's life into a tailspin. Trusts are our response to that abuse of the legal system."

The newly released documents show that many trusts were set up just before or while some Cook clients engaged in activities that later

got them into trouble.

For example, in 2001, Robert T. Harvey set up the "Lo-Ry Principle International Trust" and by 2004 it contained \$1.2 million. That is the same year, according to the Securities and Exchange Commission, in which he helped mastermind a Ponzi scheme that bilked investors of \$52 million over the next two years. In 2010, Mr. Harvey was permanently barred from the securities industry. A lawyer representing him said he was not aware that Mr. Harvey had a Cook trust, which he closed in 2007. Nor were his victims. In March, Eric T. Schneiderman, the New York State attorney general, announced a settlement with a credit card processing company, Northern Leasing Systems, that was accused of skimming \$3.6 million from mom-and-pop stores across the country. Northern Leasing agreed to refund the money and halt the skimming. Two of the company's principals, Jay Cohen and Leonard Mezei, turned out to have Cook trusts. Neither was held personally liable. Their lawyer declined to comment, and the attorney general's office did not respond to requests for comment.

Lawyers who arrange Cook trusts see them as a negotiating tool: If litigation arises, many creditors will settle for cents on the dollar, rather than face the expense of a long and difficult lawsuit halfway across the Pacific.

"You are paying blood money to stop the madness," said Jeffrey M. Verdon, a lawyer in Newport Beach, Calif., who sets up Cook trusts. Mr. Verdon said he settled a \$78 million judgment for \$7 million and a \$5 million one for \$100,000. Since settlements are private, those numbers could not be verified.

Mr. Engel, the lawyer in Denver, said a victory in American courts was merely "academic," and pointed to testimonials on his website.

One unnamed client, described as a Midwestern real estate developer, settled a \$7 million judgment for \$125,000. "Cook Islands scares them," said the developer's testimonial.

Cook trusts can backfire on their owners. That happened in the case of Gregory M. Bell, who was released last month after four years in federal prison for his role in a \$3.5 billion Ponzi scheme. Because Mr. Bell, who lived in suburban Chicago, was born in Russia and had a Cook trust, the courts considered him a flight risk. He was jailed for 14 months and denied bail. Cook law prevents trust assets from being entered under duress, so he was unable to use the \$15 million in the Cook trust to settle with the S.E.C.

In the end, the Cook trustee relented, and the money was distributed to Mr. Bell's victims as part of a plea deal, said Vincent P. Schmeltz, his lawyer.

Cook officials say they are planning to build on their success with Americans by marketing the trusts to customers in China and elsewhere in Asia. The islands are, after all, roughly midway between the United States and Asia. "We can literally get something done for you yesterday if you are an Asian client," said Ms. Davis, chief executive of the Cooks financial services authority.

New Asian customers can help the islands should American officials turn their attention to Cook trusts. But at the moment, that shift is not happening.

"Washington looks at where the big money is," said Stephen E. Shay, a tax professor at Harvard Law School and a former Treasury official. "That means tax avoidance by multinationals. But as the government squeezes these big places, more money will go into smaller and smaller quarters, and that will make the Cooks a target."

From page 17

through the ownership of personal tools and equipment.

Scantlebury mentioned two important societal concerns that arose out of the Category 3 and 4 activity. Firstly, that there was an apparent sense of entitlement, that poor home maintenance had been rewarded by extensive repairs and new homes which generated some feeling of inequity among some of the Aitutaki residents, especially those who regularly spent money on home maintenance. Secondly, community culture and political activity during the project contributed to a demoralisation within the community. The appointment of a new Mayor and his council during the project resulted in their decision to alter the Category 3 and 4 schedule. However, their decision-making took so long that the PMT decided to remain with the original list. As a result of this disquiet and the need for these community issues to be addressed, the MFEM Programme Manager went onto local radio and explained the situation in both English and Maori - that the issue wasn't about "entitlement" but that the people of Aitutaki were all beneficiaries of public finance offered by the Cook Islands and the New Zealand

governments. The importance of ongoing community dialogue cannot be understated and raises the importance of clarity around 'Who should get what?' There is an opportunity here to review the criteria and make them explicit in a widely communicated policy to all islands. The criteria needs to be flexible to address a variety of complex situations including: people living in another persons house (e.g. extended family)

people renting a house (both owner and renter) non-resident home owners (e.g. Aitutakians living in Rarotonga).

The development of such as policy instrument would reduce the potential for future disputes during the recovery phase.

One unintended outcome of the cyclone was the demolition of old or make-shift structures on the island. Through the clean up and reconstruction, newly instituted processes will ensure that future construction work adheres to the Cook Islands Building Code. The repairs and reconstruction of residential homes have enhanced the visual appeal of the island but more importantly homeowners now have homes that have been built to withstand cyclones of similar or stronger intensity.

**ADVERTISE WITH THE
COOK ISLANDS HERALD**

How to earn the respect of others

part 2

By Senior Pastor John Tangi

In Part 1 of this two Part article of Encouragement I stated that some people in society are not getting the respect that they expect to get from others because of their attitude. Yet they wanted people to respect them. In Part 1, the key to good reputation is character!

Reputation is what people say about you. Character is what you really are in the inside! Our character produces respect. The question is "What Character or Behaviour, produces respect?" The Book of Proverbs says that we are to speak with Integrity or Honesty; and to serve with Intensity; and to share with Generosity; and in our successes we are to remain HUMBLE. In Part 1 the first two lessons we looked at were,

Lesson 1, SPEAKING WITH INTEGRITY or HONESTY according to Proverbs 17v.7 (GN) "Respected people do not tell lies." Furthermore, Proverbs 10v.9 (GN) reads "The man of integrity walks securely." In other words, integrity or honesty produces reliability and stability.

Lesson 2, SERVING WITH INTENSITY This means desiring to help others, serving others, doing good, and serving God. Proverbs 14v.22 (GN) reads "You will earn the trust and respect of others if you work for good." If you do good you will gain the respect of others. The Apostle Paul said in Colossians 3v.23 "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men." Proverbs 11v.27 (GN) reads "If your goals are good, you will be respected."

Lesson 3 is SHARING WITH GENEROSITY. People who are respected are 'Generous people!' Psalm 112v.9 (GN) reads "He who gives generously to the needy and shows kindness will be powerful and respected."

Encouragement Column

With Senior Pastor John Tangi

There are two kinds of people, there are the "takers" and there are the "givers". Proverbs 11v.25 reads "A generous man will prosper, and he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."

Lesson 4 is "in all of our successes we are to remain 'humble'. In other words SUCCEEDING IN HUMILITY. Proverbs 29v.23 (GN) reads "Arrogance will bring your downfall, but if you are humble, you will be respected." In I Peter 5v.5 it reads "...to clothe yourself with humility." Arrogant attitude turns people off! But humility attracts them! Humility does not mean ignoring the successes in your life, it just means sharing the credit, acknowledge the contribution made by others, your wife; your children, the family, your friends!

Above all, we must realize that so much of what we have was because of Gods intervention! Proverbs 3v.5-6 reads "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your path." Proverbs 10v.7 (GN) reads "Good people will be remembered as a blessing, but the wicked will soon be forgotten." The question is "What do you want to be remembered for in life?" "How about your parents?" "Your children?" "Your friends?" Do you want others to remember you as an "uncaring person?" or "A quick tempered person?" The good type response would be something like..."My wife is a caring person!" or "She's a great mum!" or "He's a great dad!" and so on. Romans 8v.29

tells us that God purposed for our lives to be more like Christ. Romans 12v.2 reads "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Jesus is our model. Speak with Integrity & Honesty; Serve with Intensity; Share with Generosity; Succeed with Humility.

May this article be an encouragement to you from this time onward and also in the New Year 2014. God bless. Te Atua te aroa!



Cook Islands POST

CHRISTMAS POSTAGE SPECIAL

Our Christmas Special is on NOW and right up to the end of December!

Pay postage for 9 Christmas Cards and send the 10th Card Absolutely FREE!

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The Team at Postal wishes Everyone a Very Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

Christmaaaas! LOL

By Norma Ngatamariki

That's right, folks, it's that time of the year! I exaggerated on the 'Christmas' title and it just goes to show how excited I am. As a teen, it's understandable that the magic of Christmas has worn out for us because we've lived through so many Christmases but hey. There's always something about Christmas that brings out the kid in us. Dust off those Christmas decorations (Or, if you are rich enough, buy new ones), sort out the Christmas shopping and get busy. It'll be late night shopping sometime this week, so you will have plenty of time to get the presents and groceries sussed. Oh, and the Tropical Market is gonna be on as well, so grab a feed while you're at it (Christmas shopping takes A LOT of energy).

(I have to acknowledge those people who made the effort to go all out on their decorations and especially the trees! George Maggie's Mango/Christmas tree looks amazing when it's lit up at

night! Awesome!)

Toys, clothes and electronics are always on top of the Christmas shopping list. I really feel sorry for the mothers at this time of year. If they don't buy toys, the little ones will kick up a tantrum. If they don't buy clothes or electronics, the teens will sulk. Dads are easy to shop for because they'll accept anything that comes their way (but really, majority of them prefer a cold beer or two). Don't get me started on the cooking. Ehh! Yeah, our mamas have it tough during the festive season, so get them something nice (although sometimes, they can be a bit fussy when it comes to their presents)

I know for a fact that a lot of people will be coming over from overseas, so the island will be a tad bit overcrowded for the time being. Most of us will see this as a golden opportunity! Ring the cousins, aunts and uncles to bring stuff over from New Zealand or Australia,

where things are cheaper and high-quality. That's what I do and I'm not ashamed to admit it. If my family wants to stay in my house, I'll be expecting a little 'something-something' in return.

A typical Raro Christmas is basically inviting all of your relatives (even your uncle's cousin's sister-in-law. The more, the merrier) eating mountains of food and then drinking the night away (or is that just my family?) Just make sure that you party safely, ine! Arrange for a sober driver to take you home and don't risk having an accident on the road. It's not worth it.

The true Christmas spirit, however, is all about giving. The Christmas Box initiative is a perfect example of this and I applaud their efforts (Vaiana George, AOG Church and the volunteers) in making a positive impact on the community. Nothing can beat the smile of a child when they receive



a present. Last, but not least, Christmas is meant to be a time where you spend with your family. Exchanging gifts under the Christmas tree (or, in my case, mango tree) with your parents, grandparents and siblings is important.

Pre-Christmas Police Report

By Norma Ngatamariki

On Monday 16th, Sergeant Paraea Vainerere gives the Herald an update of the recent events that have occurred in the community throughout the weekend. There have been reports of four excessive noise complaints, which is not unusual as we are entering the festive season. "Please take your neighbours into consideration or, better yet, invite them to the party so you won't get any complaints," says Vainerere. Also, there have been incidents involving carelessness and drink-driving which poses a serious threat to, not only the drivers, but the by-standers as well. These cases are also to be expected what with the upcoming Christmas and New Year's period, "But, in the end, it's all down to the decisions you make," Vainerere states. A female driver was also apprehended for driving while intoxicated. "Young and underage drivers are also causing a problem on the road, so parents, please keep an eye

out for your kids."

There have been an alarming number of lost property incidents, and Vainerere continues to urge people to be cautious with their belongings. It was also reported that two near-drowning incidents involving children occurred. The Herald understands that this is due to the lack of parental supervision, but immediate action was carried out to prevent further casualties. Two domestic disputes were also reported and the perpetrators were dealt with appropriately, according to Vainerere.

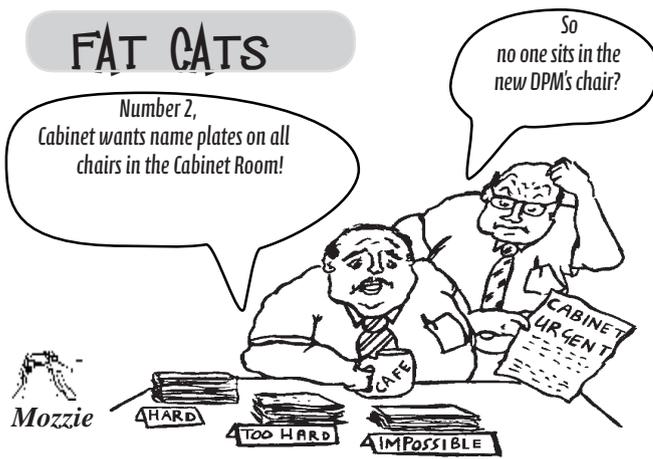
There were also four road accidents during the weekend, with one being fatal. The accident occurred in Matavera around 10am on Sunday??, with the driver dying of his injuries. "We give our condolences to the Nga family," Vainerere says.

On behalf of the Cook Islands Police Force and the Police Commissioner, Maara Tetava, Vainerere wishes the public a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. "And remember to stay safe!"



Sergeant Paraea Vainerere

FAT CATS



COCONUT ROUNDTABLE



Whispers on the sea breeze chooks that the Lord High Mandarins are facing a sizeable shortfall in housekeeping pennies. Oh woe! Has someone been at the money box-again? Or were earlier estimates are tad cocky? Seems the real picture has emerged confirming economists are no more superior than fair ground fortune tellers or bone throwers and tea leaf readers! And the size of the shortfall? Some mutter it could be as high as a mil.



Good to see law students attached to local lawyers during these University holidays. Keeping our undergrads occupied and making some dosh is helpful. What is not helpful is other scholars being labeled "interns."



Has the power gone to his head chooks? New DPM now sports a DPM number plate on his vehicle and he insists he sit on the right side of the PM in Cabinet-in Tom Tom's old seat! There must be something about that chair! With the PM expected to make at least one overseas trip a month next year, the new DPM can expect to collect a tidy sum in higher duties allowance for acting as PM! A more interesting question is what will he spend the extra funding he will get for being DPM? Pay rises all round

CHOOKS CORNER
WITH BIG RED



for his loyal staff? A new pickup for each day of the week? Whisper is he is looking for a new staff member!



It may be a sign of the times chooks. Maybe no one wants to work at the PSC anymore? Whisper is only one person is a serious contender for the latest job there.



What's happening at the old Sheraton site chooks? Anything? Or is it all just a mirage? Will it become the site of our new international 18 hole golf course? Has Big Poly become a lollie or a lemon?



Jeeppers chooks! Another ex-pat has been found holed up in a corner of the FIU! Where do they come from? What happened to Bob?



Last week down at the Avatiu harbor as the boat was preparing to sail north to Penrhyn there was the usual heated argument over

cargo and passenger priorities. As usual there was more cargo and passengers than space allowed but eventually the boat set off crowded with deck passengers. Nothing has changed in fifty years.



Oh dear chooks! Stuck in the middle of the gigantic Pacific ocean, water, water, everywhere but not a drop to drink! Where's the water? Water tanks all over the place but no water to fill them! That's where government's great water policy has been shot to bits by Mother Nature! When will the Lord High Mandarins wake up and realize that water tanks are useless if rain does not come? First, secure supply by damming up the valleys and creating big, deep lakes in the mountains. That should have been done 25 years ago but no, no, no, Mother government knows best. There's a climate change division in OPM but what use is it if the politicians keep denying there's a

water problem? Wake up! Wake up!



If only the Cooks had a leader like the Samoan PM. Now there's a real leader! No nonsense, striking fear among the bureaucrats, direct, assertive, forward looking, bold, a decision maker. Contrast that with our predicament. Indecision, directionless, cow towing to bureaucrats, afraid to stand and confront the real issues head on, constant sucking up to NZ, propping up Air NZ a NZ government owned company, afraid to venture out of the safety of the box.



Who will the Lord High Mandarins tap on the shoulder for the task of leading the task force to claw back some \$45 million in bad debts for the banking brotherhood? Could it be that Knowles all Sam? It would be a fitting reward for this former banking battler from the Kiwi trenches. Just like gumboot throwing in Taihape, don't we just love throwing money at overseas consultants?

Cook Islands
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Ending on a high

By Carmel Beattie

Two things happen at this time of the year – the first is the round of parties and Christmas preparation and the second, in light of the year’s end looming, is that we tend get a little contemplative about the year that has been and where the next year will take us. Well, there is also that third thing of hyperventilating because we don’t have enough time, money, energy to achieve everything we need to do by midnight on the 24th – but that’s another story!

For me and probably most of you, this has been such an up and down kind of year with new challenges, lessons to learn, adventures to be undertaken and business to grow but sitting at my laptop on the 18th of December, I find that I am happy with what 2013 brought me and feel an excitement for the opportunities to come.

I have always found it hard to categorise my life and am always fascinated by people who have separate compartments for different aspects of their lives e.g. work, family, play etc. With me, it is slightly different perhaps because for most of my life I have worked in an industry that allowed you to forge strong friendships which started to blur the lines between work and play and now living on our small dot in the middle of the ocean, the lines blur further as everyone has a connection in some way to one or more aspects of your life here on the island.

That is how my year has been also. I haven’t really talked about the specifics of what I am doing before because I suppose it was very much in the formative stage but now we are further down the track and I thought some of you may be interested. As with most things in my life, business has grown and opportunities developed through my blurred work, relationship lines which I find works best for me.

Our business, Te Vaine Toa Enterprises was formed by people who are interested and involved in the Tourism industry, hold a strong belief in Cook Islands tradition and culture and

want to create opportunities for ourselves and others in the Cooks. At this year’s end, we will be well on the way to achieving that vision.

We started by being asked to take on a small hotel that needed some love, dusting off the cobwebs and giving it a little physical and business makeover. Now it is greeting more guests, creating more happy memories and even making some money!

Next, because we believe that the connection with locals and their lives is what makes a holiday into something truly memorable, we developed our tour programme – Island Discoveries – which is based around giving our Manuiri the opportunity to ‘get under the skin’ of the Cook Islands and get to know us better whether that is us as people, our traditions, our environment or our arts and culture.

Our tours include ‘Navigating Pacific skies’ a land based tour with Tua Pittman who interweaves tales of voyaging both ancient and modern with explanations of the mysteries of celestial navigation. On others, guests have the opportunity to enjoy a small dinner party with locals to make new friends and learn about our lives, spend a day as a whale researcher, discover unique Cook Islands products to buy from pearls to patterns, sit with our artists to understand their inspiration and maybe take home something special to remember us by and of course, become Voyagers themselves on the Vaka for a few hours, a day or longer.

It has been hard work developing the tours but so rewarding and exciting and has then lead to our next exciting adventure – Island Concierge – which is both a Meet and Greet service at the airport with its own lounge – launching soon, if I can get the curtains sewn! – but also to provide help to guests who are staying in accommodation that may not have its own concierge facilities. We give advice on everything from tours to restaurants to the best beaches for the weather on the

day and we feel that this service will provide an opportunity for visitors to our country to get the very best out of every day which sends them home happy which brings them (and their friends) back for more! If you have any unique service that you provide or you are simply a local person who is interested in being connected to our visitors, please let me know and we can talk about opportunities together.

Our mission at Te Vaine Toa Enterprises is to prosper together as we grow opportunities and partnerships. Those opportunities and partnerships are meant to involve and benefit the people of the Cook Islands so you are a big part of our continued success and future!

Along the way, my year has been peppered with the joy of wonderful visits from loved ones, a fabulous trip and lots

and lots of hard work but at this end of the year, while I am hyperventilating slightly – not about Christmas preparations because that hasn’t even hit my radar yet (ok, NOW I have started to pant!) – I have a warm glow of satisfaction for what has been achieved and a gratitude to the many people here and beyond who have and continue to support us in our endeavours. I also have a tingly excitement for the adventure to come and the fun to be had in 2014! Let those wonderful blurred lines continue and may we grow our ‘family’ to include more of you for mutual success and fulfilment.

Aroa Kiritimiti!

PS We do specials for locals on our tours so give me a call on 55884 if you are interested or email me on vainetoo@gmail.com if you would like to be involved in Island Concierge



The public is hereby advised that the National Environment Service office will be operating this festive season at the following times:

Mon 23rd Dec: 8am – 4pm

Tues 24th Dec: 8am-1pm

Wed 25th Dec: CLOSED – Merry Xmas

Thurs 26th Dec: CLOSED

Fri 27th Dec: CLOSED

Mon 30th Dec: 8am – 1pm

Tues 31st Dec: 8am-1pm

Wed 1st Jan: CLOSED – Happy New Year

Thurs 2nd Jan: CLOSED

Friday 3rd Jan: 8am-1pm

The office will resume normal working hours on Monday 6th January 2014.

Please take note of these times and a kind reminder that no permits will be issued outside these hours.

For urgent matters, please contact the following people:

Compliance:

Phillip Strickland mob 55316

Vavia Tangatataia mob 55500

Corporate Services:

Ina Kamana mob 55506

Remember; please take your rubbish home when visiting the beach.

We wish you a very Merry Xmas and a Prosperous New Year.

Director

Vaitoti Tupa

PUBLIC NOTICES



**TE APONGA UIRA
FESTIVE SEASON TRADING HOURS**

Te Aponga Uira will close for the Christmas/New Year holidays from 1pm Tuesday 24th December 2013 and will re-open for normal operations at 8am on Monday 6th January 2014.

Customers seeking new power connections before Christmas will need to have completed administration work (application, inspections, etc) by 4.30pm Monday 23 December 2013.

During the holidays, the following services will be available:

1. 24 hour fault services remain available 7 days a week throughout the festive period. Call 25 257 for this service.
2. Receipting of electricity payments only on your accounts will be available at the Tutakimoa Office on the 27th, 30th and 31st December 2013 and 3rd January 2014 between the hours of 9am and 12 noon.

"We wish you a Happy Xmas and wonderful New Year" – The Board and staff of TAU.



**OFFICE OF THE LEADER
OF THE OPPOSITION**

Office Hours Season 2013

The Office of the Leader of the Opposition closes 1pm on Tuesday 24 December 2013 and re-opens again on Monday 6 January 2014.

For emergencies contact:

Eddie Drollet (mob-52884) or Rosita Taikakara (mob-55713)

The Leader of the Opposition and staff join in saying to everyone

"May Peace be your gift at Christmas and your blessing all year through!

Merry Xmas and Happy New Year!

EAT LESS

MOVE MORE

HEART FOUNDATION

VACANCY



POSITIONS VACANT

- 1) Teller**
2) Customer Service Representative

To be the best you need to mix with the right company! At Westpac, we pride ourselves on;

- Providing exceptional customer service,
- Providing products and services,

to help our customers achieve their financial aspirations.

As a Teller or Customer Service Representative, you would play a key customer facing role in our branch network.

The goals of a Teller or Customer Service Representative is to;

- Provide a great experience for our customers,
- Contribute to our overall mission in becoming the number one service organization,
- Ensure customers' immediate service needs are met.

As part of our team, you'll be sharing our commitment to being one of the Pacific's most responsible companies - responsible to our customers, to the communities in which we operate and to our environment.

If this sounds like the opportunity you have been looking for, submit your application along with your CV to:

John P Wilson
Branch Manager
PO Box 42, RAROTONGA
Or email: westpaccookislands@westpac.com.au
Applications will close on 20 December 2013.

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST



REPRESENTATIVE TO THE BOARD

We are seeking to fill the position for employers who are not members of Chamber of Commerce to the Board of CINSF as per the provisions of the CINSF Act 2000.

Therefore expressions of interest are being sought from Registered Employers of the Fund to represent the Non-Chamber Employers to the Board of CINSF are invited.

Applicants must;

- Not be a registered member of the Cook Islands Chamber of Commerce
- Be a contributing employer to the Cook Islands National Superannuation Fund

Please forward your expressions of interest and CV before 4.00pm Friday, 27th December 2013 to:

The Acting Chairman,
Cook Islands National Superannuation Board,
PO Box 3076
Avarua.
RAROTONGA
or by email to: ceo@superfund.gov.ck

Io Marama exhibition highlight of visit

By Charles Pitt

Some outstanding carvings were on display last Wednesday and Thursday at Master Carver Mike Tavioni's new Life Skills Academy "Io Marama" in Atupa next to the Whale Centre, which is currently under construction.

The exhibition of intricate carvings was the highlight of the visit by five students from Te Wananga o Aotearoa in Palmerston North New Zealand who are studying level 7 whakairo (traditional Maori carving). For the students, who saved hard for their trip, it was a unique opportunity for them to learn from our local master carver.

The visit was organized by Cook Islander Stormy Kara who came from New Zealand some years ago to be apprenticed to her Uncle, tattooist "T" Tetini Pekepo. The Herald featured her then as a budding artistic talent and she has not disappointed.

The group was accompanied by their Tutor Craig Kawana.

It is an experience they wish to extend well into the future.

Io Marama is an ambitious project. Once the roofing iron is extended to the far poles, there will be sufficient space under cover for at least four separate art courses to be conducted. The complex will house an art gallery featuring works by every artist in the Cook Islands, along with a kitchen and dining area and sleeping area for artists in residence.

Arts and crafts will be offered for sale through small huts positioned at the front of the complex.

Tavioni is accepting donations of building materials and funds to complete the project.



Hula Mania-Go!

By Norma Ngatamariki

Excitement and glee are two words that can most certainly be associated with Miha Mitchell, Managing Director of Nesian Mana. And the reason for this? It can only be the upcoming Hula Mania, an event which has the whole of the Cook Islands on its toes. This is a competition which promotes Cook Islands dancing at its finest, with a total of fifteen contestants partaking in it. "The whole week has just been full-on preparation for Hula Mania," says Mitchell. Event co-ordinators have described the event as 'one of a kind'. Promotion for Hula Mania had begun earlier in the year and since then, it has gained popularity. Mitchell guarantees not one, but two nights filled with dancing, singing and basically the best entertainment around. "You will not be disappointed." There will also be a variety of food stalls, as well as arts and crafts stalls outside of Te Aroa Nui Hall, Arorangi. Hula Mania will be held on Friday the 20th and Saturday the 21st of December, so be in quick to get a front row seat. Tickets will be selling at \$35 for two nights (Adults) and \$20 for children (aged 6-13). For the one night, it is \$30 for adults and \$18 for children.

Mitchell would like to acknowledge the efforts of his sponsors and to Maxine Kokaua, for the marketing package.