

RESTRICTED

Office of Te Minita Whanaketanga

Chair, Cabinet

**Report on overseas travel: Hon Willie Jackson**

- 1 I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Rarotonga from 13 – 17 July 2023 to advance Māori to Māori cooperation and development and attend a headline Matariki event relating to my Māori Development portfolio.

**Report**

- 2 My visit to Rarotonga delivered on the key visit objective of strengthening our contemporary hononga Māori, as agreed in the Statement of Partnership – Waka Hourua / Vaka Purua. The visit, which was timed to coincide with Matariki, served to reemphasise our whakapapa links, and his well-informed discussions with counterparts paved the way for further exchanges on economic development, sustainable tourism and language revitalisation.
- 3 Key discussions undertaken throughout my travel focused on Māori to Māori investment, partnerships and business development support, the language journey for New Zealand and the Cook Islands, and the move to more sustainable, regenerative and culture-first tourism.

*Aotearoa Society Matariki Kiwiana Dinner*

- 4 I started my visit with a dinner meeting with members of the Aotearoa Society where we honoured Matariki and highlighted the shared history between the Cook Islands and New Zealand. At the dinner, I acknowledged how the Aotearoa Society had raised \$30,000 provided to the NZ Government Relief Fund to support Cyclone Gabrielle response.

*Call on Minister of Culture, Hon George Maggie Angene*

- 5 I met with the Minister of Culture, George Maggie Angene. We conversed partly in Te Reo Māori, which provided a fitting backdrop for our conversation on the protection and promotion of our respective reo. I shared my personal involvement and key moments in New Zealand's Māori renaissance like the presentation of the Māori Language Petition to Parliament over 50 years ago, and the importance of language preservation.
- 6 We discussed the lost generations of reo speakers in New Zealand, reflecting that the revitalisation of the language had been led by the young as speakers over 50 remain few. It was shared that the converse was true for the Cook Islands with 80% of Cook Islanders over 50 speaking Cook Islands Māori, but the rate drops to 20% for those under 20.
- 7 Minister Angene emphasised the importance that the Cook Islands Government is attached to language preservation, 7(b)(i), 7(b)(ii), 9(2)(ba)(i)  
7(b)(i), 7(b)(ii), 9(2)(ba)(i)

7(b)(i)  
7(b)(ii)  
9(2)(ba)(i)

7(b)(i), 7(b)(ii), 9(2)(ba)(i)

8 7(b)(i), 7(b)(ii), 9(2)(ba)(i)

7(b)(i)  
7(b)(ii)  
9(2)(ba)(i)

*Business and Investment Roundtable*

9 I attended a business and investment roundtable with the Minister of Business Trade and Investment, Albert Nicholas, and local businesses provided a valuable platform to exchange ideas on future Māori to Māori business cooperation. There was a strong appetite from both sides to explore investment cooperation with iwi Māori.

10 I reflected in my remarks that the Cook Islands and New Zealand have not yet capitalised on our whanaungatanga. While iwi businesses have grown over the past 30 years and now contribute \$70 billion to the New Zealand economy, examples of iwi investment in the Cook Islands are rare. The primary examples included the newly established Te Vānanga Are Tapere o Takitumu (a Māori performing arts school), and investment in the restaurant The Lazy Trout, where our business and investment lunch was held.

11 9(2)(ba)(i), 9(2)(g)(i)

9(2)(ba)(i), 9(2)(g)(i)

9(2)(ba)(i)  
9(2)(g)(i)

However, iwi investment is viewed differently, including the prospect of Māori to Māori investment, partnerships and business development support in the tourism, fishing, aquaculture, agriculture, traditional medicine, creative and knowledge sectors.

12 One business owner reflected that New Zealand Māori approach sustainable business in the same way they do. Their business is not about revenue today, but about setting up a platform for future generations. I expressed a desire to see more two-way collaboration. It was agreed that there would be value in a follow-up exchange with the Federation of Māori Authorities and a possible two-way business study tour.

*Traditional Lagoon Sailing*

13 In line with the Matariki and Waka Hourua/Vaka Purua kaupapa of the visit, I was taken out on a traditional double hulled canoe, Marumarū Atua, along with local ariki, tohunga, and members of the Cook Islands Voyaging Society. The sailing was a visual demonstration of our shared whanaungatanga..

*Meeting with Language Revitalisation Specialists*

14 At a Matariki Language Revitalisation Breakfast the following day with the Chair of Kopapa Reo Māori, the acting Secretary of Cultural Development and other leading language proponents, there was a keen interest from both sides

in doing more, including to normalise Te Reo Māori as the primary language in public events, churches and Parliament. There was also discussion around the importance of supporting the publication of further language resources, and the work the High Commission is doing in this regard. It was agreed that there would be value in a visit by Te Taura Whiri to discuss how we might strengthen collaboration in this area further.

*Meeting with Cook Islands Tourism*

15 The Cook Islands Tourism Corporation hosted me and local businesses at Te Ara Museum of Cultural Enterprise. Like New Zealand, and other neighbouring Pacific Islands, the Cook Islands explained that it is on a journey towards sustainable and regenerative tourism. Tourism Chief Executive, Karla Eggleton noted that, with a visitor ratio of 9.5 to 1, it was important to foster regenerative, community-led tourism initiatives, in order to rebuild with better focus and better intent, and future proof the industry.

16 Indigenous businesses presented on their respective journeys, all with a heavy focus of sharing the Cook Islands culture with tourists and memeitaki (well-being) at the centre. In doing so, they identified challenges with business sustainability, and spoke of a desire to expand the stakeholders in their businesses and collaborate more widely, particularly with Māori.

17 In terms of cooperation with Māori, there was a strong desire to form mentoring partnerships and create a platform for an exchange of ideas. 7(b)(i), 7(b)(ii)

7(b)(i), 7(b)(ii), 9(2)(i)

7(b)(i)  
7(b)(ii)  
9(2)(i)

18 I shared the journey by Māori in New Zealand towards capitalising on their wealth and developing their youth, and I identified iwi trade training opportunities as a worthwhile area of cooperation to explore. I also noted my support of the relationship between Cook Islands Tourism and the New Zealand Māori Tourism Board being developed, noting that there is mutual value in such a relationship.

*Meeting with Te Ui Ariki*

19 I was welcomed onto Atupare Marae with a turou by Te Ui Ariki, the traditional leaders of the Cook Islands. The Secretary of Te Ui Ariki, Puna Rakanui, spoke of the strong ties between our iwi Māori as well as new and prospective projects. These included a partnership with the High Commission to construct a mahau for Atupare Marae, 9(2)(i)

9(2)(i)

9(2)(i) and a recently signed Hinemoa Halo partnership with Māori on ocean protection and climate leadership for the Pacific.

**RESTRICTED**

*Matariki Taurima Kiriata: Reception and Premier of Whētū Mārama Bright Star*

- 20 My final formal event for the visit was to celebrate Matariki Day with the Cook Islands at the reception and screening of Whētū Mārama Bright Star. At the event, I acknowledged the whakapapa links between the Cook Islands and New Zealand as well as Sir Hekenukumai Ngaiwi Puhipi (Hek Busby) who was the focus of the Whētū Mārama Bright Star film.
- 21 Sir Hekenukumai has made an incredibly important contribution to New Zealand, and the wider region, through his dedication to rediscovering and passing on traditional wayfaring knowledge and skills to the next generation. I noted that he would be proud to see his story shown to his Cook Islands tuakana, on such an auspicious day, and in the context of Matariki Korikori.
- 22 I also spoke to the fact that we committed last year to strengthening our Māori to Māori ties further in our Statement of Partnership – Waka Hourua / Vaka Purua, and that a key objective of my visit was to better understand what more we can do in the economic development and language revitalisation space.

**Proactive release**

- 23 I propose to release parts of this Cabinet paper within normal Cabinet-mandated timeframes. Proactive release is subject to redaction as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

**Recommendations**

- 24 I recommend that Cabinet:
- 1.1 Note this report from my travel from 13 – 17 July 2023 to Rarotonga to advance Māori to Māori cooperation and development and attend a headline Matariki event relating to my Māori Development portfolio.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Willie Jackson  
Te Minita Whanaketanga Māori