



Parliament of Australia

Australian Parliamentary Delegation to Kiribati and the  
Kingdom of Tonga

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25 June to 2 July 2017



**Delegation Membership****Leader**

Senator the Hon. Ian MacDonald, Senator for Queensland, Liberal Party of Australia

**Members**

Mr Milton Dick MP, Member for Oxley, Queensland, Australian Labor Party

Mr Steve Georganas MP, Member for Hindmarsh, South Australia, Australian Labor Party

Senator John Williams, Senator for New South Wales, The Nationals

**Delegation Secretary**

Mr Gerry McInally, Senate Committee Office

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## Introduction

This report outlines the key activities and observations of the Australian parliamentary delegation's visit to Kiribati and the Kingdom of Tonga between 25 June and 2 July 2017.

### *Objectives of the Parliamentary Delegation – Stepping Up*

The overall objective of parliamentary visits is to further enhance bilateral relations, develop deeper ties between countries, build the capacity of the parliamentary institution, and promote democratic values, through interaction and engagement with other parliaments and parliamentarians. The parliamentary visit format is designed to allow participants to explore and examine particular issues in greater depth through meetings with dignitaries, officials, non-government organisations (NGOs) and members of the public, and site inspections.

This delegation visited Kiribati and the Kingdom of Tonga specifically to enhance and support the objectives of the 'Stepping Up Australia's Pacific engagement' program (the program). The program is a result of a commitment made at the 2016 Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting by the Prime Minister, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, to a step change in Australia's engagement with the Pacific. The Prime Minister confirmed this commitment by announcing a range of measures to strengthen Australia's engagement with the Pacific at the 2017 Forum Leaders' Meeting on 8 September 2017 in Apia, Samoa. These measures included:

- Stronger partnerships for economic growth;
- Stronger partnerships for security; and
- Stronger relationships between people.

The program is intended to assist Pacific nations with current challenges that include:

- responding to the impacts of climate change and responding to natural disasters;
- sustaining economic growth and boosting education;
- skills and jobs for growing populations;
- gender equality and recognising the essential role of women in achieving better development outcomes; and
- the threat of major disease outbreak and tackling transnational crime.

To support the program development assistance to the region will be \$1.1 billion in 2017–18.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Australia's Pacific Engagement, <http://dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/engagement/Pages/stepping-up-australias-pacific-engagement.aspx>, accessed 7 November 2017.

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## Stronger economic partnerships<sup>2</sup>

On 8 September 2017, the Prime Minister announced the establishment of a new Pacific Labour Scheme to enable citizens of Pacific island countries to take up low and semi-skilled work opportunities in rural and regional Australia for up to three years. The Scheme will:

- commence in July 2018 with an initial intake of up to 2000 workers;
- focus on sectors in Australia with projected job growth and which match Pacific island skill sets;
- be employer-sponsored and require labour market testing to ensure Australians have priority for local jobs; and
- contain protections to safeguard against worker exploitation.

At the same meeting the Prime Minister signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with his counterparts from Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu to facilitate their entry into the PLS.

Building on the 17 000 workers from the Pacific and Timor-Leste who have worked in Australia under the Seasonal Worker Programme since 2012, the Prime Minister also announced a range of measures to support participation in the Programme and to improve uptake, including:

- increasing Australian industry engagement and input;
- piloting additional support for employer provided pastoral care and reduce up-front costs;
- strengthening approaches to skills training;
- improving visa arrangements; and
- providing additional assistance for seasonal workers to access their superannuation.

The government will establish a Pacific Labour Facility to connect Australian employers with Pacific workers and support the administration of the Pacific Labour Scheme. The Facility will:

- increase the quality of training and supply of workers;
- promote the Scheme with Australian employers;
- provide pastoral care services for workers in Australia;
- support the return of Pacific workers to their local communities and economies; and
- monitor the social and economic impacts of the labour mobility arrangements.

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Stepping up Australia's Pacific Engagement*, available at: <http://dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/engagement/Pages/stepping-up-australias-pacific-engagement.aspx>, accessed 8 December 2017.

At the meeting the Prime Minister announced that Australia will continue to work with the private sector, New Zealand and the International Monetary Fund to reduce the cost of remittances from Australia to the Pacific. The Prime Minister also welcomed Vanuatu as the 11th signatory of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus. The PACER Plus agreement is central to achieving better integration of economies in the Pacific.

### **Stronger security partnerships<sup>3</sup>**

On 8 September 2017, Pacific Islands Forum Leaders agreed to commence consultations on a comprehensive 'Biketawa Plus' Pacific security declaration to guide future regional responses to emerging security issues. The new declaration is intended to recognise the importance of an expanded concept of security, inclusive of human security, humanitarian assistance, prioritising environmental security, and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and climate change.

The Prime Minister also signed bilateral security partnership MOUs with his counterparts from Tuvalu and Nauru. These new MOUs provide umbrella arrangements covering existing areas of security cooperation with these countries on maritime surveillance, police, border and legal capacity building, as well as new engagement on identity, border and health security. Work on a similar MOU with Kiribati has commenced. This follows the signature of a bilateral security treaty between Australia and the Solomon Islands on 14 August 2017.

To enhance regional health security, the Prime Minister signed MOUs with Nauru, Tuvalu and Tonga on 8 September 2017 to enable Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration to provide medicine-quality testing on their behalf. Work on a similar MOU with Kiribati is underway. To help build regional disaster response capability, on 12 August 2017 the Foreign Minister announced that Australia and Fiji had agreed to co-host a regional civil-military workshop on disaster response later this year.

These initiatives build on Australia's long-standing security cooperation with the Pacific. Australia has committed \$2 billion to the Pacific Maritime Security Program over the next 30 years, with support to provide 19 replacement patrol boats across the Pacific and an aerial surveillance capability to bolster Pacific island maritime security capabilities. The Australian Federal Police also has an active law enforcement role in the Pacific, including through the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre. The Australian Fisheries Management Authority supports efforts through the Forum Fisheries Agency to improve fisheries management in the Pacific and combat illegal fishing.

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<sup>3</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Stepping up Australia's Pacific Engagement*, available at: <http://dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/engagement/Pages/stepping-up-australias-pacific-engagement.aspx>, accessed 8 December 2017.

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## **Stronger people-to-people links<sup>4</sup>**

On 8 September 2017, the Prime Minister announced the new Pacific Connect program to forge stronger, strategic-level relationships between Pacific and Australian leaders across both the public, private and community sectors. This follows the Foreign Minister's 12 August announcement that Australia will establish a schools partnership program with the Pacific and a Pacific digital cultural access program.

These programs build on Australia's enduring people-to-people ties. Over the past decade, more than 8 200 students from the Pacific have received Australia Awards for study in Australia or in the region. Since its 2014 launch, the New Colombo Plan has enabled over 1300 Australian students to study in 10 Pacific island countries, and will provide support for a further 1100 participants in the region in 2018.

### ***2017 Parliamentary Delegation***

The parliamentary delegation visited Tarawa, Kiribati and Nuku'alofa, Tonga and met with representatives from government institutions, private business, non-government organisations and parliamentary counterparts.

The delegation sought to examine and inquire into a range of issues during the course of its visit. In Kiribati these included:

- Fisheries, resilience to climate change and Disaster Management
- Marine security and training
- Higher education
- Tourism and culture
- Health and family violence
- Education
- The work of Australian Volunteers (AVID)

During the delegation's visit to Tonga the committee held discussions and site visits on the following topics:

- Parliamentary procedure
- Law and order
- Domestic violence
- Trade, commerce and economic growth
- Agriculture, horticulture and drought prevention
- Jobs and skills
- Marine security

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<sup>4</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Stepping up Australia's Pacific Engagement*, available at: <http://dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/engagement/Pages/stepping-up-australias-pacific-engagement.aspx>, accessed 8 December 2017.

- Energy security and generation
- Disaster management
- Australian volunteers
- Tourism and culture
- Communications and technology

### **Acknowledgements**

The delegation's visit was organised and supported by the Australian Parliament's International and Parliamentary Relations Office (IPRO) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). During most meetings and site visits the delegation was accompanied by DFAT officers stationed in Kiribati and Tonga. The professionalism, knowledge and guidance of these officers were very much appreciated. The delegation would also like to acknowledge the highly informative briefings that DFAT kindly organised at each post.

The delegation extends its thanks to all the Australian High Commission staff who assisted the delegation, in particular:

Australian High Commission, Kiribati

- HE Bruce Cowled, High Commissioner
- Ms Kate Chamley, First Secretary and Consul

Australian High Commission, Tonga

- HE Andrew Ford, High Commissioner
- Rhona McPhee, Deputy High Commissioner

The delegation also wishes to thank the government officials and staff of all the projects visited in Kiribati and Tonga who kindly gave their time to assist the delegation. Photographs in this report are provided courtesy of the delegation secretary.

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## Kiribati

Kiribati (pronounced Kiribas) is an independent republic (since it achieved independence from the UK in 1979) within the Commonwealth of Nations, located in the central Pacific Ocean, about 4 000 km (about 2 500 mi) southwest of Hawaii. It is part of the division of the Pacific islands that is known as Micronesia. Kiribati consists of 33 coral islands divided among three island groups: the Gilbert Islands, the Phoenix Islands, and the Line Islands.<sup>5</sup>



South Tarawa, the most populated island in Kiribati

### Political overview

It has a 45-member unicameral parliament, 44 members of which are elected and one is appointed: the Member of Parliament chosen by the Rabi Council to serve the interests of those I-Kiribati originally from Banaba, but who now live on the Fijian Island of Rabi. The Speaker is elected ex-officio by the Members of Parliament.

Members of Parliament are elected for a four-year term by non-compulsory universal adult suffrage. Once parliamentary elections are completed, the MPs meet and nominate at least three and no more than four presidential candidates. A President (Te Beretitenti) is then elected by popular vote, on a first-past-the-post basis.

The President is both Head of Government and Head of State, and holds ministerial responsibility for Foreign Affairs, Police, and the Public Service. He or she appoints from the Parliament a Cabinet of no more than 12 others including the Vice President (also a minister) and the Attorney-General.

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<sup>5</sup> Kiribati Tourism, *About Kiribati*, available at <http://www.kiribatitourism.gov.ki/kiribati-pacific-ocean-location/>, accessed 7 November 2017.

At the March 2016 Presidential elections, Mr Taneti Maamau was elected President. The new Cabinet has been sworn in by the Chief Justice.<sup>6</sup>

### **Australian Kiribati relations**

Australia and Kiribati enjoy close and longstanding relations based on regional and international cooperation and trade links, a substantial development assistance program, support for maritime surveillance and broader security cooperation, and people-to-people contacts.<sup>7</sup>

### **Delegation itinerary**

The delegation briefly met with the President, H.E Taneti Maamau at the airport, and were formally met by the Vice President, Hon. Kourabi Nanem.

#### ***Day 1 – Monday 26 June – Tarawa***

Australian High Commission for briefing

Briefing by Government of Kiribati

- KV20 (Kiribati Vision 20 Years)
- Resilience to Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction
- Fisheries Management

Parliament House visit

- Parliamentary Procedures
- Electoral Overview

#### ***Day 2 – Tuesday 27 June 2017***

Visit to Dai Nippon Primary School

Site visit to Patrol Boat 'RKS Teanoai' and tour of Betio

Tour of the Marine Training Centre (MTC) and briefing by staff

Kiribati Institute of Technology (KIT)

- Tour, briefing and meeting with Australian Alumni

Visit to Tungaru Central Hospital

- Tungaru Rehabilitation Centre
- Family Health Clinic
- Briefing on Non-communicable Diseases

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<sup>6</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Kiribati Country Brief*, available at: <http://dfat.gov.au/geo/kiribati/pages/kiribati-country-brief.aspx>, accessed 30 November 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Kiribati Country Brief*, available at: <http://dfat.gov.au/geo/kiribati/pages/kiribati-country-brief.aspx>, accessed 30 November 2017.

Meet Australian personnel working and volunteering in Kiribati

## Meeting with representatives of the Government of Kiribati

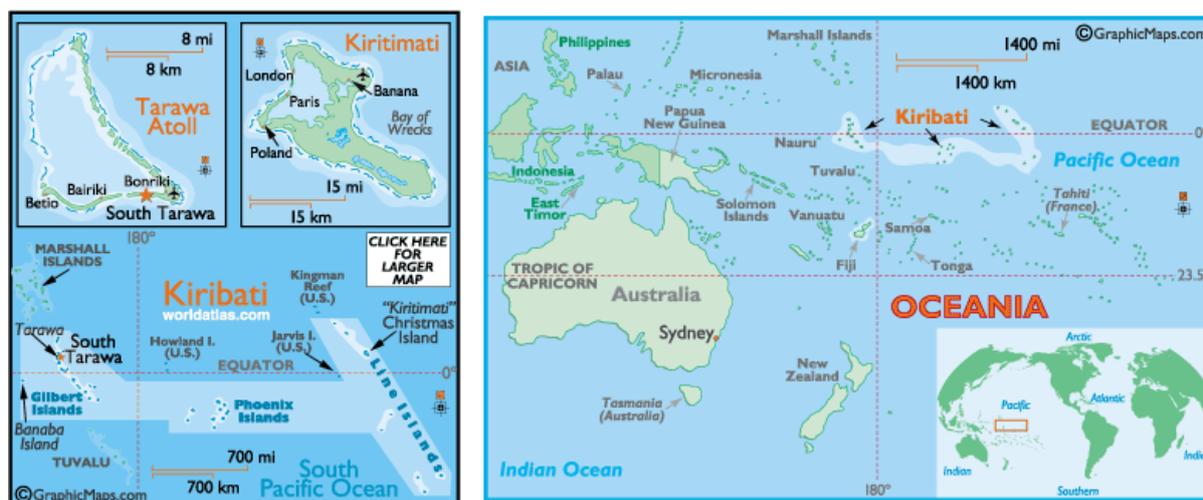
The delegation met with representatives of the Government of Kiribati to discuss a range of topics critical to the Kiribati economy.

### KV20 – Kiribati 20-Year Vision – 2016-2036

KV20 is the Kiribati's long-term economic and social plan to provide an overarching narrative for the country's development for the next 20 years. It identifies the sectors of fisheries and tourism as the two key drivers for development. Health and Prosperity are the other overriding policy objectives.

### Fisheries, Climate Change and Disaster Management

Kiribati's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extends to almost 3.5 million square kilometres. This vast expanse is core to Kiribati's economy, primarily through domestic fishing, and offshore licensing.



Map of Kiribati, available at: <https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/oceania/ki.htm>

Officials from the Department of Fisheries and the Department of Foreign Affairs informed the delegation that the focus of government efforts to expand its fisheries income has been through change to the licensing regime to the 'vessel day scheme', which costs between \$8 000 to \$11 000 per day. Much of the revenue was drawn from Tuna fishing. This change has resulted in a significant increase in revenue to around \$200 million (AUD) annually, which accounts for almost 70 per cent of Kiribati's annual income. This represents a 57.1 per cent increase between 2009 and 2015.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to off-shore licensing, aquaculture is playing an increasing role in the Kiribati economy. The development of a broader fish processing and aquaculture sector role was outlined by officials. In partnership with a number of international partners, a fish processing plant is being built, and the capacity for the treatment of seaweed is being increased.

<sup>8</sup> Government of Kiribati, KV20, October 2017, p.16. Available at: <http://www.mfed.gov.ki/publications/kv20-vision>, accessed 11 December 2017.

A number of challenges are also associated with the management of Kiribati's marine resources. Illegal fishing and the protection of the country's vast EEZ requires ongoing vigilance and support from the international community. A claim to settle marine boundaries has been lodged with the UN, and Kiribati makes extensive use of the West and Central Pacific Vessel Monitoring system (VMS) to stem illegal fishing. Tuna stocks are managed in collaboration with international partners, and guided by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). Australia's assistance through the Pacific Patrol Boat (PPB) program is integral to the management and enforcement of agreements.

### ***Disaster Management***

Disaster management and climate change mitigation and adaptation are key policy areas in the KV20 plan. Officials informed the delegation of the 'whole of island' approach the government is taking. Specific action is necessary to tackle the impacts of rising sea levels on agriculture, coastal erosion and the salination of the country's water supply. The impact of climate change on the water supply and weather patterns has led to fears of drought, with a state of emergency only six months away without significant rainfall.

Actions to mitigate the impact have concentrated on a number of key areas:

- efforts to enhance capacity in the outer island to take the pressure of the hugely over-populated island of South Tarawa;
- exploring small and medium size desalination projects in partnership with the Asian Development Bank;
- land reclamation projects;
- development of a vulnerability index for all the islands; and
- development of technological resources to inform innovative solutions.

### **Parliamentary procedures**

The delegation visited Parliament House and met with officials to discuss the development, current makeup and procedures of the Kiribati parliament.

The first parliament sat in Kiribati in 1963 with 5 members. This was superseded in 1967 with the establishment of the House of Representatives comprising 25 members. Today the parliament has 45 members.

The two main parties are the Tobwaan Kiribati Party, which holds 19 seats and the Boutokaan Te Koaua (Pillars of Truth) party, which holds 26. However the President, Taneti Mamau was supported in the presidential election by the Tobwaan Kiribati Party.

### **Marine security and training**

#### ***Marine Training Centre***

Employment in merchant shipping is a valuable source of employment for I-Kiribati. The delegation visited the Marine Training Centre (MTC) which currently has 190 trainees. The MTC has trained approximately 6 500 cadets since it was established in

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1967. The centre is a joint venture between the Government of Kiribati and South Pacific Marine Services (SPMS), a German led partnership. The MTC receives financing from Australia and New Zealand. Australia has also facilitated the opportunities for trainee seafarers by introducing a three year multi entry visa.

Most MTC graduates become seafarers and find employment with shipping companies through South Pacific Marine Services, a consortium which recruits I-Kiribati and Tuvaluan crew for its member companies. Seafaring is a substantial source of remittance for I-Kiribati, with figures showing the income from a single seafarer can support 7.5 people in Kiribati. The MTC plays a key role, though declining in relative terms, to Kiribati's national economy through remittances, estimated at up to 17–20 per cent of GDP.

The MTC delivers courses including engineering, navigation, maintenance, safety, fishing, and steward and hospitality courses. The Kiribati Institute of Technology collaborates with the MTC through the Australian-funded Skills for Employment Program (SfEP) to deliver hospitality training. Some graduates of this course applied recently to work at Hamilton Island under the Northern Australia Worker Pilot Program.

### ***Australia's Pacific Patrol Boat Program***

The delegation visited the Patrol Boat 'RKS Teanoai' which is one of the 22 Pacific Patrol Boats (PPBs) gifted to 12 Pacific Island Countries (PICs).

The provision of the PPBs is part of the broader Defence Cooperation Program which aims to:

- promote the professionalism and capacity of our key regional partners;
- improve Australia's capacity to work with those partners in response to common security challenges; and
- build strong people-to-people links with regional defence and security partners at the tactical, operational and strategic levels.

Officers from the Royal Australian Navy and the Navy of Kiribati led the delegation on a tour of the vessel, and discussed its the operational role and typical voyage. The ongoing replacement project of the PPBs was also raised.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Austal, *Pacific Patrol Boat*, available at: <https://www.austal.com/ships/pacific-patrol-boat>, accessed on 12 December 2017.



Delegation Leader, Senator Ian MacDonald, and Senator John Williams with the Captain of the RKS Teanoai

The Pacific Patrol Boat Replacement program (PPBR) is part of the Commonwealth's Pacific Maritime Security Program (PMSP) that aims to enhance practical maritime security cooperation across the South Pacific. The PPBR broadens and further strengthens the region's capability to respond to issues such as fisheries protection, transnational crime, and search and rescue. The PPBR shall include 19 or more 39.5m steel vessels designed and constructed by Austal for delivery to up to 13 Pacific Island nations from late 2018.

## Education

The delegation visited the Dai Nippon Primary School. The school was recently rehabilitated through the Kiribati Education Improvement Program (KEIP). It is one of 18 schools that have been rehabilitated to date under the program.

Under the KEIP Australia is working to provide:

- safe and healthy learning environments;
- improved teaching resources;
- a modern curriculum;
- professional teachers; and
- strengthened management of the education system.

KEIP started in 2011 and is currently in Phase III, which commenced in April 2016. Through the KEIP, Australia is providing up to \$70 million across Phases I, II and III (2011–19). It supports the goal of the Kiribati Education Sector Strategic Plan to improve the quality of education provided in Kiribati schools. KEIP aims to improve access to quality primary education for all girls and boys, including children with a disability.



The delegation with the Australian High Commissioner, HE Bruce Cowled, and a class from Dia Nippon Primary School

## Higher Education

The delegation was welcomed to the Kiribati Institute of Technology with a tour, discussion with officials, and a lunch with Australian alumni.

Australia has been supporting improvements to the quality, quantity and equity of training delivery at the Kiribati Institute of Technology (KIT) since 2011. This was initially provided through the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Sector Strengthening Program (Phases I-II, 2011–16, \$23.6 million), and since July 2016, through the Kiribati Skills for Employment Program (2016–19, \$20 million).

Under the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Sector Strengthening Program the KIT qualifications were aligned with Australia's national vocational training standards. Since 2012 Australian support has enabled 642 I-Kiribati women and men to graduate from the KIT with internationally recognised qualifications in areas of skill demand.

### *Northern Australia Worker Pilot Program (NAWPP)*

In April 2016 Kiribati signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Australia to formalise arrangements for the implementation of the NAWPP. There are currently 32 I-Kiribati workers in Australia under the NAWPP.

Under the program, up to 250 workers from Kiribati, Tuvalu and Nauru will have an opportunity to work in northern Australia for up to three years. Tourism employers

Mulpha (Hayman Island) and Hamilton Island, are now approved employers for the pilot, with additional employers completing requirements for NAWPP accreditation.

Mulpha was the first company to bring workers to Australia under the program, and the first group of 18 workers commenced at Hayman Island in October 2016.

Due to the impact of Cyclone Debbie on Hayman Island in March 2017, nine I-Kiribati workers who were in Brisbane preparing to travel to Hayman Island, were returned home to Kiribati. Mulpha have since brought back some of those workers (carpenters) to assist in rebuilding, and plan to bring back the remaining workers in July 2017. Mulpha will start recruiting in December 2017 for the resort re-opening in July 2018.

A further recruitment exercise for 30 I-Kiribati workers for Hamilton Island is scheduled for late July 2017.

## **Health**

### ***Visit to Tungaru Central Hospital***

The delegation visited the Tungaru Central Hospital, the main hospital servicing the people of Kiribati. Australia has supported the hospital to establish a rehabilitation centre (re-opened in August 2015), a Diabetic Foot Clinic (established in April 2017) and the Tuberculosis Control Centre and Laboratory (opened in 2010).

### ***Tungaru Rehabilitation Centre***

The Tungaru Rehabilitation Centre provides rehabilitation services, including:

- fitting and support for prosthetics;
- physiotherapy; and
- counselling.

It has an important role in preventative and curative care for people with, or at risk of developing complications from a non-communicable disease. In 2012, a fire destroyed the centre and the service had to function in a reduced temporary form. Australia provided the Government of Kiribati with \$731 000 to re-build the centre (opened in August 2015) to replace essential machinery required for prosthetics services and undertake outreach programs. Australia continues to support the ongoing professional development of staff at the centre.

### ***Increase in amputations***

The increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases, especially diabetes, has resulted in a steady rise in amputations in Kiribati. The World Health Organisation notes that Kiribati has one of the highest rates of amputations per capita in the world. Between November 2013 and November 2015, there were 454 limb or partial-limb amputations. Anecdotally, there were 5-6 limb amputations per week in 2015. The World Health Organisation estimates that 50 per cent of hospital admissions and amputations (due to diabetes) can be prevented with appropriate foot care.

### *Diabetic Foot Clinic*

Australia has supported (\$43 000, 2016–18) the Kiribati Ministry of Health and the Latter Day Saints Charities to establish a Diabetic Foot Clinic. The clinic started operating in April 2017 (located in the Outpatients Department at the Tungaru Central Hospital). With funding from Australia, Motivation Australia worked with the Tungaru Rehabilitation Service to design and equip the clinic. The Ministry of Health and Medical Services is still working to refurbish the clinic. This clinic uses new, cost-effective techniques for halting the progression of diabetic foot ulcers to amputation stage.

A prosthetist and orthotist specialist from a similar diabetic foot clinic in Samoa has been working (initially as a volunteer) with the centre. He is mentoring the I-Kiribati prosthetist and orthotist graduate who trained in Cambodia. She is the first person in the Pacific with this qualification and the delegation was greatly impressed following their discussions with her. Australia has supported her to attend orientation and in-service training at the Samoa clinic. There are two other I-Kiribati staff due to complete their degrees in Cambodia by the end of 2017.

### *Tuberculosis Control Centre and Laboratory*

Since 2003, Kiribati has had the highest notification rates of tuberculosis in the Pacific (outside of Papua New Guinea). The incidence rates are consistently above 350 per 100 000. Transmission risk is increased by:

- high population density and domestic overcrowding in small and poorly ventilated housing (especially on South Tarawa);
- malnutrition;
- smoke exposure (cigarettes, use of solid fuel for household cooking); and
- a high prevalence of diabetes.

Australia's support for the implementation of the Government's National Tuberculosis (TB) Program has been \$4.2million in 2008–16, and is delivered in partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. This has helped improve the quality, accessibility and efficiency of tuberculosis diagnosis and treatment in Kiribati.

The Tuberculosis Control Centre and Laboratory (opened in 2010) was built and equipped with Australian funding. The centre enables early diagnosis of drug-resistant strains and has assisted in the increased detection of tuberculosis cases from 265 in 2010 to 496 in 2016 - per 100 000 population.

The GeneXpert machine (installed in October 2014) has significantly improved the diagnosis and management of tuberculosis patients in Kiribati, with rapid and more accurate testing. With Australia's support, Kiribati has been able to maintain the TB treatment success rate at above 85 per cent.

Early detection and treatment of active cases reduces the transmission of tuberculosis in communities. The Ministry of Health and Medical Services is updating their National TB and Leprosy Strategic Plan 2016–19 with Australian assistance to guide partner investments in TB over the coming years.

### *Eliminate Dengue Program*

In late 2016, an entomology survey was conducted by Monash University in Kiribati, which found that conducting an operational pilot of Wolbachia technology in Kiribati could have a significant benefit.

Mosquito eggs laden with the Wolbachia bacteria have been found to reduce the transmission of several vector borne diseases transmitted by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, including:

- all 4 dengue serotypes;
- zika;
- chikungunya; and
- yellow fever.

The Minister of Health and Medical Services, Hon Tauanei Marea, has shown a keen interest in the Eliminate Dengue Program..

### *Family Health Clinic*

Australia provided \$150 000 (2014–16) to the Ministry of Health and Medical Services to establish and equip a stand-alone Family Health Clinic at the Tungaru Central Hospital.

This clinic is providing survivors of violence (both physical and sexual) with privacy and confidentiality when accessing health services.

The Kiribati Ministry of Public Works and Utilities led on constructing and equipping the clinic.

This funding has also facilitated the training of nurses and medical assistants at the Tungaru Central Hospital on standard operating procedures for responding to and reporting cases of domestic violence.

Australia's ongoing support, to improve accessibility of services (including justice and social welfare) to survivors of violence in both Tarawa and the outer islands, is making a difference:

Forty per cent of police officers have now completed training on the enforcement of the 'Te Rau Nte Mweenga' (Family Peace) Act 2014. The Act criminalises all forms of violence against women and children. This training is improving police understanding of their powers under the law as well as confidence in performing their role.

This has contributed to:

- an increase in the number of protection orders (over 100 issued in 2016, out of a total 600 domestic violence cases; and
- 145 lay magistrates trained in human rights; and
- changes to court proceedings that are required under the Family Peace Act.

Australia's efforts to address domestic violence to date have focused on supporting the Government to improve the services available to survivors of violence:

- counselling;
- welfare;
- shelter; and
- access to justice.

Looking forward, Australia is planning to increase the focus on primary prevention of violence (to prevent violence from happening in the first place), through support for activities that:

- encourage broader social and behavioural change; and
- underpinned by awareness of gender inequality as a driver of violence.

Australia is also funding the United Nations Regional Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health Program (Tranche 1, USD800 000, 2014–15). This Program is improving access in Kiribati to high quality and appropriate health care services for survivors of gender based violence.

## Tonga

The Kingdom of Tonga is a Polynesian country that lies to the south of Samoa, southeast of Fiji and north east of New Zealand. The Tongan archipelago is comprised of 176 islands, 36 of which are inhabited by a population of approximately 106 000. The islands are divided into four main groups—Tongatapu, Ha'apai and Vava'u and the Niuas. The capital Nuku'alofa is located on the main island of Tongatapu.



### Political overview

Tonga is a constitutional monarchy, making it unique in the Pacific. Its monarchy is over 1 000 years old and its constitution dates back to 1875. Following the death of King George Tupou V in March 2012, his younger brother became king and took the title King Tupou VI. King Tupou VI's official coronation was held on 4 July 2015. As Head of State the King is Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's Armed Forces. The King is advised by a Privy Council whose members he appoints.

The governing structure comprises the Executive (Cabinet), Legislature and Judiciary. A reformed constitution was agreed by the Legislative Assembly in December 2009 and implemented through legislation passed in April 2010. The new constitution considerably reduced the King's power, which was devolved to the Cabinet. Cabinet now answers to the Legislative Assembly, however the King retains the right to veto legislation.

Map of Tonga, available at:

<https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/oceania/to.htm>

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The Legislative Assembly comprises 17 People's Representatives, nine Noble Representatives elected from among the holders of Tonga's 33 noble titles, and up to four additional members appointed by the King on the advice of the Prime Minister. The King appoints the Prime Minister on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly.

The most recent election prior to the delegation's visit was held in November 2014, which elected Prime Minister, Hon. Samiuela 'Akilisi Pohiva. Shortly after the visit the King unexpectedly dissolved the parliament and ordered new elections. These took place in November 2017, while the ministry has yet to be announced, Prime Minister, Hon. Samiuela 'Akilisi Pohiva and all ministers in the previous cabinet were re-elected. MPs will meet elect a Prime Minister on 18 December 2017.

### **Bilateral relations**

Australia and Tonga enjoy a close bilateral relationship, supported by our aid program, Defence Cooperation Program, the Tonga Police Development Program and people-to-people links. The Tongan Government established a High Commission in Canberra in August 2008.

Australia is an important focus for Tongans seeking education, travel and business opportunities. The largest communities of Tongans in Australia are in Victoria and NSW, with smaller groups in the ACT and Queensland. Approximately 25 000 Australians identify themselves as being of Tongan ancestry.

### **Economic and defence relations**

Two-way trade between Australia and Tonga was valued at \$87 million (in goods and services) in 2016. Tongan exports are mostly made up of agricultural produce, which include root crops, fish and squash pumpkins. Major imports are food and beverage items and fuel.

In 2016, Australia's goods exports to Tonga totalled approximately \$22 million (including meat; aircraft parts; ships and boats; and measuring equipment). Tonga's goods exports to Australia totalled approximately \$1.82 million (mainly spices; vegetables; fruit and nuts; and fish).

Tonga represents almost 60 per cent of the 17 320 Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) participants to date. 10 189 Tongan workers (1191 women, 8998 men) have been granted visas to participate in the SWP since it commenced as a permanent programme in July 2012. Australia is one of the largest sources of remittances to Tonga.

Construction and infrastructure projects funded by donor grants and soft loans are sources of growth. Despite its economic difficulties, Tonga remains one of the best performers in the Pacific in terms of progress against the Millennium Development Goals. Agriculture is the leading productive sector. The manufacturing sector is very small.

Tourism is currently modest but with a large potential for expansion. Tonga's main trading partners are New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, the United States and Japan. Most

Tongan exports are agricultural produce while imports cover the full range of consumer and industrial goods.

### ***Defence***

The Defence Cooperation Program in Tonga includes the provision of Australian Defence Force advisors, a range of training and capacity building initiatives and support for bilateral and regional exercises. Australia also contributes to the Tonga Police Development Program, a joint undertaking between Tonga, Australia and New Zealand, which aims to build police capacity and service standards.<sup>10</sup>



The delegation with Australia High Commission staff, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

### **Delegation itinerary**

#### ***Day 1 – Thursday 29 June – Nuku'alofa***

Australian High Commission for briefing

Courtesy call with Tongan Prime Minister Samuela 'Akilisi Pohiva

Parliament House visit

- Parliamentary Procedures
- Electoral Overview

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<sup>10</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Tonga Country Brief*, available at <http://dfat.gov.au/geo/tonga/Pages/tonga-country-brief.aspx>, accessed 13 December 2017.

### Business and Trade Lunch

Review of Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Program (PHAMA) and Tonga Skills programs.

Welcome reception with Members of the Tongan Cabinet, parliamentarians, Business Leaders and dignitaries

### ***Day 2 – Friday 30 June 2017***

Visit the Women and Children's Crisis Centre

Tour of the Nuku'alofa Central Police Station

Briefing on the Pacific Patrol Boat Program and Defence Cooperation Program and inspection of Pacific Patrol Boats at Masefield Naval Base

Lunch with Deputy Prime Minister Siaosi Sovaleni, Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Climate Change and Communications Senior Officials and Tonga Power Limited

Site visit to examine the Nuku'alofa Urban Development Program drought prevention measures

Australian Volunteers for International Development, Australian Business Volunteers and Australian Advisers

### ***Day 3 – Saturday 1 July 2017***

Site visit to the Mabe Pearl Project

Site visit to Fafa Island pearl production fields

Attendance at the Pacific Nations Cup Rugby match between Tonga and Samoa

## Meeting with Prime Minister Samuela Akilisi Pohiva

The delegation paid a courtesy call to the Tongan Prime Minister Samuela 'Akilisi Pohiva. The prime Minister recounted his journey from a pro-democracy activist to becoming the first commoner elected as Prime Minister by Parliament, rather than being appointed by the King. The Prime Minister was jailed on two occasions for his activism, and informed the delegation of the high cost the struggle had had on him and his family.



The delegation with the Australian High Commissioner, HE Andrew Ford, and the Prime Minister of Tonga, Samuela Akilisi Pohiva.

The Prime Minister then outlined his perspective on the challenges facing Tonga:

- literacy is a major barrier to development with 95 per cent of the population considered illiterate;
- a change in mindset is required by the senior members of the government and public servants to advance prosperity and progress;
- religion can be a barrier to progress and prosperity, though not necessarily as a consequence of directions from churches;
- drugs are a major issue, with Tonga being used as a staging point for the movement of Ice from China around the Pacific and as a transit point to New Zealand and Australia.

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## **Parliamentary procedures**

The delegation was invited to visit Parliament House and was briefed by the Clerk and Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Assembly on parliamentary procedures and evolution of parliament in Tonga.

The Assembly was established in 1862, by King George Tupou I, but only met every four years. It was provided for in the 1875 Constitution which comprised 132 Articles.

Universal suffrage was attained in 1951 and the first woman was elected to the Assembly in 1975. However, only eight women have been elected in total.

In 2007 a Commission was established to explore reform, following significant civil unrest in 2006. The number of representatives elected from the people was increased to 17, with nine elected from Nobles. The Speaker and Deputy Speaker are elected only from the Nobles. Voter registration in Tonga is compulsory.

Each MP is allocated \$200 000 per annum to spend in their constituency.

## **Business and Trade**

The delegation had lunch with the following representatives from the business and civil sectors to discuss various key issues and policy areas prevalent in the country:

- Tonga Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
- Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Program (PHAMA);
- Nishi Trading;
- Bank of the South Pacific;
- ANZ Bank;
- Tonga Skills;
- Pacific Sunrise; and
- General Manager of the Tanoa Dateline Hotel.

## **Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Program (PHAMA) and Tonga Skills programs**

The delegation met with representatives from the Australian High Commission and Defence partners responsible for the management of PHAMA and the Tongan skills program to discuss looking at how the aid program is supporting Tonga's export capacity.

Under the Australia-Tonga Aid Partnership (2016–19), the Australian Government will provide an estimated \$30.4 million in total Official Development Assistance

(ODA) to Tonga in 2017–18. This will include an estimated \$17.6 million in bilateral funding to Tonga managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.<sup>11</sup>

Participants discussed the focus of the ODA funding:

- economic and tax reform;
- private sector development with a focus on promoting entrepreneurship and small business acumen;
- technical and vocational Skills—focus on upskilling to the Australian qualification standard for many tertiary skills; and
- health—supporting the overall health care system with particular focus on workforce development; disease prevention, and outreach to enhance preventative health measures.

ODA is supporting a further two areas of reform:

- increasing the participation of women in the economy—with specific aid to support the Families Free of Violence (FFOV) program; and
- disaster Management—support from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology with seasonal forecasting and sea-level monitoring.

### **Women and Children's Crisis Centre**

The delegation visited the Women and Children's Crisis Centre to meet with staff and volunteers. The centre is a key element in the Australia's ODA package.

The centre is working with police and the courts to try and make an impact on the cultural challenges which underpin the complex issue of domestic violence in Tonga. A number of factors contribute to the problem in Tonga, which has one of the highest divorce rates across the Pacific. According to the staff in the centre, the seasonal worker program provides many challenges to families through separation. Churches and religious leaders have also been criticised for not speaking out against the problem.

A number of initiatives are currently in place or being developed, with the support of the Australian High Commission:

- establishment of women's groups;
- establishment of a safe house for respite up to seven days;
- a holistic campaign across all media to highlight the problem;
- a 'no wrong door' approach to reporting and support provision;
- use of the recently passed Family Violence Act;
- working closely with the police to develop a community response;

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<sup>11</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Overview of Australia's aid program to Tonga*, available at <http://dfat.gov.au/geo/tonga/development-assistance/pages/development-assistance-in-tonga.aspx>, accessed on 13 December 2017.

- the use of male advocates against domestic violence; and
- the use of sporting advocates.



The delegation with staff from the Women and Children Crisis Centre in Nuku'alofa

The delegation was very grateful for the insightful commentary from the staff and volunteers and commends their work.

### **Tour of the Nuku'alofa Central Police Station**

The Central Police Station is currently being refurbished and extended to provide a modern, technological advanced resource for the Tongan Police. The refurbishment is being assisted by funding from Australia's ODA commitment.

The delegation met senior officers and staff of the Tongan Police, as well as AFP officers deployed in Tonga. According to officers the crime has dropped significantly in recent months, and is trending downwards overall. This is attributed to increased focus on community policing and intelligence gathering. The Tongan Police also reported an increasingly positive perception of police, and initiatives such as the operation of a boot camp for young people involved in crime are proving fruitful.

In terms of policing in partnership with other Pacific nations, the Tongan police are working with Australia through:

- collaboration working with international crime agencies to tackle marine crime through monitoring and intelligence gathering through the Pacific Transnational Crime Centre; and
- training of Tongan Police by the AFP who make their training calendars available to the Tongan Police.

The issue of recently deported Tongan nationals was also discussed. Many of these individuals have not lived in Tonga for a very long time, if ever, and the community are struggling to provide appropriate support for them. Intelligence sharing is hampered by privacy restrictions on the extent of information that can be communicated by the AFP.

### **Marine and defence cooperation**

The delegation met with officers and Australian Defence Force personnel responsible for the operation of the Pacific Patrol Boat Program, and the Defence Cooperation Program in Tonga.



Tongan Police Search and Rescue vessel, provided as part of the Defence Cooperation Program

Aside from local emergency management and disaster response, the Tongan and Australian Navies work together in the surveillance of fisheries, the surveying of Tonga's harbours for safe navigation, and in providing disaster response to other Pacific nations. For example, a Tongan Pacific Patrol Boat was first on the scene following a tsunami that hit Samoa in 2011.

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Tonga defence personnel have also contributed to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) mission from 2003–2013, Iraq from 2005–2008, and Afghanistan from 2010–2015.

### **Tourism training projects**

Following the meeting with Defence personnel the delegation were invited to view Handicrafts created by local Tongans for the export market. The project, funded by in part through Australia's ODA program, provides exposure to local artists, and a joint commercial vehicle for them to get their goods into the local and international markets.

### **Lunch with Deputy Prime Minister**

The delegation had lunch with the Deputy Prime Minister Siaosi Sovaleni, and Senior Officials from the Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Climate Change and Communications and Tonga Power Limited.

Attendees at the lunch were:

- Deputy Prime Minister Siaosi Sovaleni
- Mr Paula Mau, CEO, Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Climate Change and Communications
- Ms Luisa Malolo, Climate Change Division
- Mr Kakau Foliaki, Renewable Energy Division
- Mr Andrew Toimoana, ICT Division
- Mr Saia Vaipuna, Cyber Security

A number of issues were discussed over the lunch including the funding and development of renewable energy, the management of Tonga's water supply, and cyber security.

### **Nishi Trading**

The delegation visited Nishi Trading, a commercial farming company providing training, skills, research and expertise to develop the local farming industry. The delegation was fortunate to be there for the presentation of the registration of the company as a nationally accredited training provider. Minoru Nishi, the Managing Director, took the members of the delegation on a tour of the facilities and raised issues where he felt Australia could provide assistance to the sustainability of the Tongan farming industry:

- the Seasonal Workers program could be expanded to provide accredited training to increase capacity in Tonga;
- technical expertise could be made available in the processing green waste, and soil testing; and
- an expansion of the Australian Business Volunteers program in Tonga.

### **Nuku'alofa Urban Development Program**

The delegation undertook site visits to a number of drought prevention components of the Nuku'alofa Urban Development Program. Mr John Gilday, the Team Leader for the project, accompanied the delegation on a visit to the national rugby stadium which has received funding as part of the program for water management, and also travelled through a number of newly developed bore fields.

Following its site visits the delegation met with a number of Australian Volunteers in Tonga as part of the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program.

### **Mabe Pearls and Marine Special Management Area (Fafa Island)**

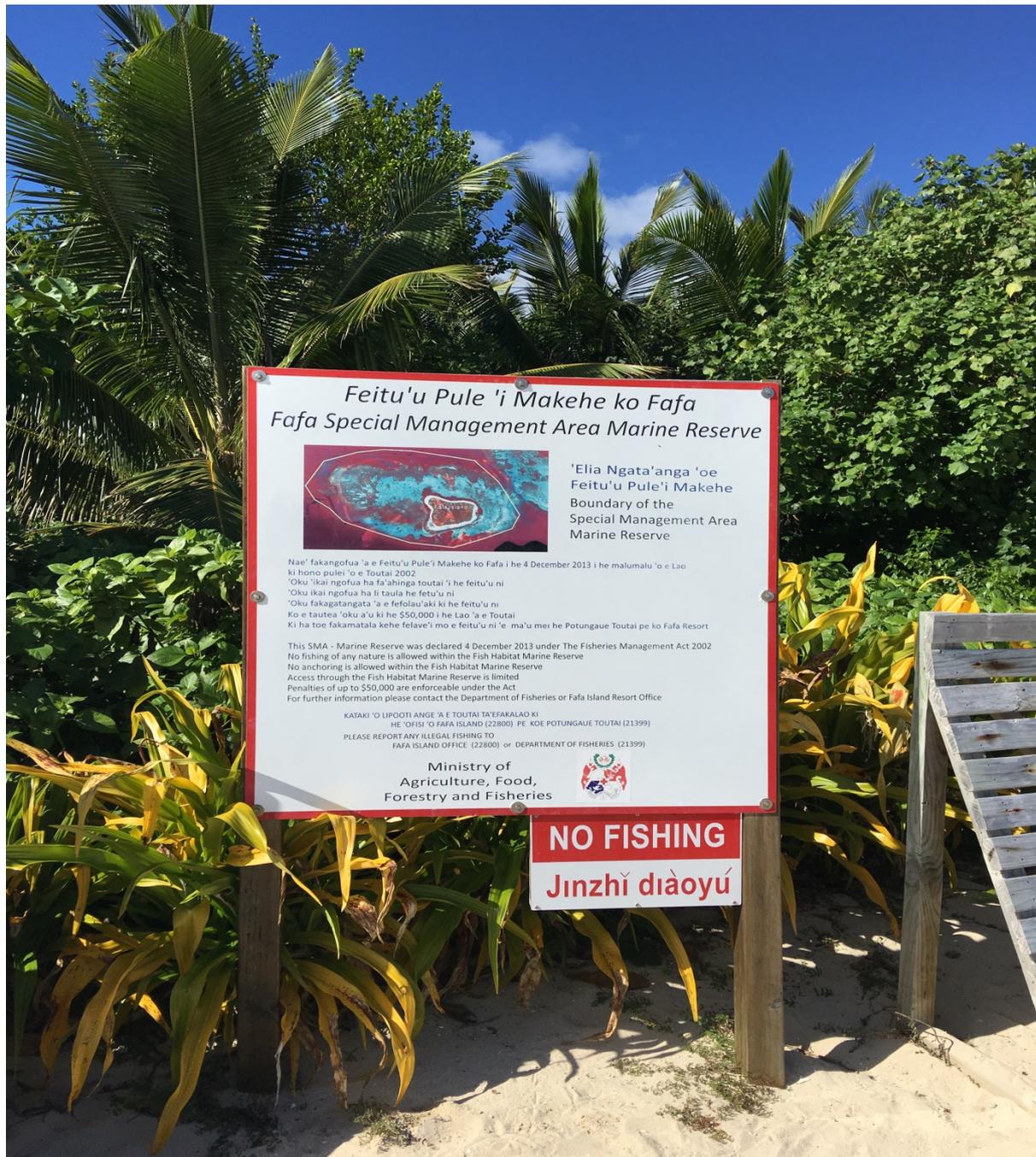
The delegation's final visit was to explore the development of the Tongan pearl industry, and the policy behind the Special Management Areas that allow coastal communities to manage their local marine area for fishing and aquaculture use.

The first stop was to view the Mabe Pearl project managed by the Tongan Government Fisheries Division, with support from the University of the Sunshine Coast and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research.

The oyster seeding for the Mabe Pearls project is being rolled out to communities in the hope of developing a successful industry to cater for tourists, and the export market. The export market is of particular interest as there are more Tongans living outside of Tonga than live in the country, which is a resource the government sees as an untapped market.

### **Special Management Area (SMAs)**

Under the *Fisheries Management Act 2002*, so far six local communities have been designated as Coastal Communities with Special Management Areas (SMAs), for the purpose of community-based fisheries management in their coastal areas. This was mainly due to their general concern of declining coastal fisheries resources which they rely on for food and income. These communities therefore take the leading role in managing their coastal fisheries resources with assistance from the Fisheries Division. Coastal community management committees (CCMCs) and coastal community management plans (CCMPs) were developed to assist in their management role.



Fafa Island, Special Management Area

Key management objectives in their CCMPs include controlling fishing activities, restoring fish stock and habitat in no-fishing areas (Fish Habitat Reserves (FHRs)), raising community awareness on fisheries conservation and management, promoting sustainable fishing practices and improving living standards in the community. The Fisheries (Coastal Communities) Regulations 2009 were also gazetted to assist in the implementation of their CCMPs and to complement existing fisheries legislation for enforcement within SMAs. It is their community vision and goal that their SMAs and management efforts will help revive the health and status of their coastal fisheries resources for current and future generations.