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**MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEPARTMENT OF UTILITIES STAFF SUMMIT HAILED A SUCCESS**

**Alofi Niue, - 07 July 2023** – The Ministry of Infrastructure's Department of Utilities held a staff summit on Friday, June 30, 2023, at the Matavai Resort conference room to allow discussions among department leaders and officials to evaluate the previous year's performance, analyse, and outline the future roadmap to improve the quality of public services.

The summit focused on critical themes such as the corporate plan, annual budgets, compliance duties, technological, financial management, human resource development, asset management, and employee compensation.

Director Clinton Chapman planned and led the summit by emphasizing the primary objectives, identifying performance gaps and issues, and recommending the next steps.

Crossley Tatui, Minister for Infrastructure and Government Reforms, opened the meeting and recognized the department staff, including Felicia Pihigia-Talagi, Director of Project Management Coordination Unit, Executive Assistant Pats Sionetama, and Aytron Tatui, Ministry of Finance and Planning representative. Craig Smart, Project Manager of Downer Construction, also attended the summit.

Minister Tatui emphasized the need of the summit for department personnel to meet in a more official and friendlier setting than their regular workplaces.

He stated that the Niue Assembly had authorized the national budget earlier in the week before the start of the new fiscal year, allowing departments to continue providing necessary products and services to the people. That the national summit is set to take place in August/September 2023 to consider reports from various sectors and stakeholders' views.

Minister Tatui stated that the department meeting must review their strategies in light of the budget topic "Building Resilience through Reforms." He complimented the department's employees for their dedication and effort in meeting the 24-hour demands of utility services.

Three significant management concerns demand immediate addressing, according to the Public Accounts Committee report delivered to the Niue Assembly. These are "capacity and capability, wage disparities, and the high cost of asset maintenance and replacement."

Andre Siohane, the Government Regulator, introduced the strategic planning framework and reminded the summit of the importance of full compliance and adherence to the various governance standards, such as the Niue Ko Kaina and Clean and ADORN Niue Initiative (CAN I) project.

The meeting closed with a robust open discussion. Question and Answers on the genuine challenges that the department and government should address as part of the changes.

The department acknowledged the donor partners' assistance and funds in achieving their objectives. A report will be created to capture the summit outcomes and to track the development of the department's work programme leading up to the national summit.

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