



GOVERNMENT OF NIUE

MEDIA RELEASE

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GOVERNMENT OF NIUE WORKS TO IMPROVE MARITIME LAW

Alofi, Niue – 18 July 2024 – The Government of Niue, in partnership with New Zealand’s Pacific Maritime Safety Programme (PMSP) has spent the past week working to strengthen and improve Niue’s maritime law around safety, environmental and liability issues.

Like most other countries, Niue is a party to a wide number of international agreements dealing with many aspects of maritime law. For example, conventions setting the environmental and safety standards that large foreign ships must meet when operating in Niue waters, as well as the insurance requirements for those vessels in the event that something goes wrong. PMSP has been assisting the Government with its compliance with these conventions, which can give rise to complicated issues of international law.



PMSP is a New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade programme delivered by Maritime NZ. PMSP works with Niue government agencies to support maritime safety in Niue. The Minister of Infrastructure Honourable Crossley Tatui said that “maritime law was a fast-evolving area and it was important for countries to proactively keep their law up to date, rather than getting caught on the back foot by a disaster before any changes were made”.

To assist with this project, PMSP has funded the visit of Dr Bevan Marten, a maritime law expert from Iazard Weston in Wellington, to provide support to the Department of Transport. Last week Dr Marten met with officials from Transport, Environment, Police, Fisheries, Crown Law and Utilities to discuss the various international obligations Niue has and how the country can better meet those obligations through domestic law reform.

The first output of this round of consultation is likely to be a Maritime Liability Bill, updating Niue’s law so that in the unlikely event of a major maritime disaster, Niue is in a strong position to access compensation from the vessel’s owners or insurers. Other work will include new maritime environmental standards for vessel-source pollution, and legislation governing Niue’s powers to respond to a hazardous vessel incident.

Acknowledging the support from the Government of New Zealand, Hon Tatui said “This project aligns with our Niue National Strategic Plan 2016-2026 to provide and maintain safe, secure and reliable transport infrastructure and services at international standards and to be prepared to respond to national disasters and emergencies. The grounding of the fishing vessel on Beveridge Reef in 2022 was a reminder that we cannot be complacent.”

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For further information, please contact:

Lynsey Talagi, Maritime Manager, Department of Transport, Email: Lynsey.Talagi@gov.nu
Anzee Mougavalu, GON Communications Officer, Email: NiueGovernment.Media@gov.nu