



NEW ZEALAND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE



New Zealand Ministry of
Foreign Affairs and Trade
Manatū Aotearoa

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Joanna Spratt
josprattnz@gmail.com

195 Lambton Quay
Private Bag 18-901
Wellington 6160
New Zealand

T +64 4 439 8000
F +64 4 472 9596

Dear Joanna Spratt

I refer to your email of 11 December 2017 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

"I note in the recent Briefing to the Incoming Minister there is a reference to an MFAT Pacific Framework, and to country strategies that guide the Aid Programme. I have searched the MFAT website and am unable to locate these documents. Can you please direct me to where these documents are?"

The Pacific Framework document will soon be publicly available on our website. We aim to do this by the end of March and undertake to inform you once it has been done. Therefore, under section 18(d) of the OIA, I am refusing this part of your request as this information will soon be publicly available.

As the country strategies are draft internal documents that have not been discussed with Pacific Island Governments, the documents themselves are being withheld under section 6(a) of the OIA, because their release would likely prejudice the international relations of the New Zealand Government. However, attached to this letter is a summary of the key points of each of the strategies which can be released.

You have the right under section 28(3) of the OIA to seek a review of this response by the Ombudsman.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Adams
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Pacific Country Strategies: Summary for Release

During 2017, New Zealand Government officials prepared draft, internal strategies for ten of our relationships with Pacific Island countries. These draft internal country strategies have been neither approved by New Zealand Government Ministers nor discussed with Pacific Island Governments because they are internal, working-level documents. Substantial material from these draft internal country strategies is being withheld under Section 6(a) of the Official Information Act, as it has been deemed that their release would prejudice the international relations of New Zealand. However, below we have supplied a summary of the material from the Strategies that can be released.

1. Principles that Guide New Zealand's Engagement in the Pacific

All ten Strategies were developed to provide New Zealand officials with long-term guidance for our approach to these Pacific Island countries. The Strategies align with the principles and vision of the Framework for New Zealand Government Engagement in the Pacific ("the Pacific Framework"), a version of which is to be publicly released in late March 2018. The Strategies follow the vision articulated in the Pacific Framework of "a stable and prosperous Pacific in which New Zealand's interests and influence are safeguarded" as well as the following five principles guiding New Zealand's engagement in the region:

- **Understanding**
- **Friendship**
- **Mutual benefit**
- **Collective impact**
- **Sustainability**

2. Country outlook

Each Country Strategy provided a summary of the outlook for New Zealand's engagement with that Pacific Island country. Those outlook sections are summarised below.

Cook Islands

The Cook Islands are self-governing in free association with New Zealand. This constitutional arrangement means that the Cook Islands are part of the Realm of New Zealand, and gives all Cook Islanders New Zealand citizenship. New Zealand has no legal powers to unilaterally change the status of the relationship and is therefore committed to strengthening self-government until such time as the Cook Islands may decide to change the relationship. This special relationship prescribes mutual obligations and expectations. The Cook Islands are expected to uphold shared values and principles including human rights and democracy, while New Zealand has specific obligations for foreign affairs and defence/security.

Fiji

Fiji and New Zealand are natural partners, sharing geography, historical links and a Pacific identity. Fiji has the most developed economy of the Pacific island countries and is a transport, logistics and political hub for the region. There is significant movement of people between Fiji and New Zealand. Around 15,000 Fijians call New Zealand home. Fiji is a top New Zealand tourist destination, and around 150,000 New Zealanders visit Fiji every year. Growing seasonal labour mobility is an emergent feature in the human and economic links. Fiji and New Zealand are economically important to one another and there is potential for this area of engagement to grow. Fiji is New Zealand's 26th most important trading partner, and New Zealand is Fiji's third most important trading partner. There is a mutual understanding of our respective cultures, and Tikanga Māori resonates in Fiji. Sport is high value currency for the relationship, with a number of Fijians participating in professional level rugby in New Zealand.

Kiribati

New Zealand and Kiribati have a strong relationship based on Pacific geography and shared development interests. As one of the larger aid donors in Kiribati, and one of a select few countries with a fully-staffed resident diplomatic footprint, New Zealand has a high level of influence within Kiribati's polity, economy and society. Our foreign policy engagement has increased significantly in recent years as a result of Kiribati's

emergence as a leading voice within the Pacific on climate change issues and its increasing profile on regional and international issues of importance to New Zealand, such as regional fisheries.

Niue

Niue is self-governing in free association with New Zealand. This means that Niue is part of the Realm of New Zealand and gives all Niueans New Zealand citizenship. New Zealand has no legal powers to unilaterally change the status of the relationship until Niue decides it wants to change that status. This relationship is the basis for our engagement with Niue. In effect, Niue has the freedom to make its own laws and governance decisions but it is not an independent, sovereign state. The Niue Constitution Act 1974 outlines New Zealand's obligations to Niue in respect of citizenship, foreign affairs, defence (New Zealand would have a role in Niue's foreign affairs, defence and security only at the behest of Niue itself) and economic and administrative assistance. In return, shared New Zealand citizenship confers obligations and expectations on Niue that the conduct of its affairs and treatment of its people are consistent with the values New Zealand expects and exercises, including that there would be no surprises that would or could have potentially repercussions for New Zealand, either reputationally or materially.

Papua New Guinea

PNG is unique in the Pacific in its potential to drive regional prosperity and is the only Pacific island country to bridge the Pacific and South East Asia. It is also unique within the Pacific in its geographic and population size and its high degree of diversity. PNG is expected to see an increase in gross national income through the 2020s and 2030s, but ongoing serious challenges related to poverty and low human development indicators. New Zealand has a wide range of interests in PNG, including regional stability and security, commercial interests, and sustainable management of ocean resources.

Samoa

New Zealand has a close and multifaceted relationship with Samoa, built on a foundation of our shared history. The unique Treaty of Friendship (1962) frames post-independence relations and is important in differentiating Samoa from other relationships. The complexity of ties and myriad of connections with New Zealand make this relationship fundamentally a political one, with strong domestic interests. New Zealand's relationship with Samoa has been underpinned by close political

relationships, and close engagement and alignment on foreign policy and regional issues, including trade, aid and regional collaboration. Samoa has been a leader of good governance in the region, and it is in New Zealand's interest to see this sustained. The Samoan diaspora in New Zealand, and extensive family, cultural and political links, add significant strength and depth to the relationship. The diaspora is expected to grow rapidly over the next 20 years, as is the number of New Zealand citizens living in Samoa. In the 2013 census, 144,138 New Zealanders (48.7% of the Pasifika population) identified as Samoan. Samoa's population in the same year was 190,652.

Solomon Islands

New Zealand has stronger engagement with Solomon Islands than it did 15 years ago, due to our substantial presence through the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) and large increase in development assistance. The tourism, fisheries, and agriculture sectors all present potential for diversification and broader participation in the economy. These sectors would however require sustained engagement for supportive reforms, and significant investment.

Tonga

Tonga and New Zealand share a mature bilateral relationship. We share a sea border, strong people-to-people links and historical ties. Tonga has a revered and influential constitutional monarch and a young democracy. New Zealand's interests in Tonga are driven mainly by people links stemming from migration, and shared regional interests including security and development cooperation. The relationship is underpinned by the large number of New Zealanders of Tongan descent living in New Zealand, and Tongans with connections to New Zealand. The Tongan monarch and Māori Kingitanga enjoy a long-standing relationship, as do our Defence Forces.

Tuvalu

Tuvalu has a small population base. It has standing in both Pacific regional and multilateral environments. On climate change in particular Tuvalu is, and will likely continue to be, a prominent player. Tuvalu is made up of nine inhabited islands with a population of approximately 11,000. It is the fourth smallest nation in the world. With an average elevation of 1.83m above sea level, it is one of the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change. As a consequence, Tuvalu is preparing to respond to the impacts of rising sea level and more intense cyclone events. New

Zealand has a large Tuvaluan population, in relative terms for a country of 11,000 people. The 2013 Census of New Zealand reported 3,537 Tuvaluans.

Vanuatu

New Zealand and Vanuatu have a strong relationship based on shared geography, growing people-to-people links rooted in the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme, consistent engagement and close international development cooperation. New Zealand is friend of Vanuatu, with some shared cultural characteristics and a reliable source of assistance in times of humanitarian need.

3. Strategic Priorities

Each Country Strategy outlined a number of Strategic Priorities to guide New Zealand's engagement with each Pacific Island country. They are summarised below.

Cook Islands

- Strategic Priority One: Bilateral relationship and linkages reflective of the constitutional relationship
- Strategic Priority Two: Economic stability commensurate to need
- Strategic Priority Three: Self-reliance

Fiji

- Strategic Priority One: Social and political links and shared values
- Strategic Priority Two: Economic integration via two-way trade, labour mobility, private sector investment and regional economic cooperation
- Strategic Priority Three: Security and defence links
- Strategic Priority Four: Regional leadership

Kiribati

- Strategic Priority One: Population/migration issues

- Strategic Priority Two: Health and education services
- Strategic Priority Three: Good governance and financial management
- Strategic Priority Four: Regional and multilateral diplomacy

Niue

- Strategic Priority One: Bilateral relationship and linkages, including constitutional obligations and mature partnership
- Strategic Priority Two: Coordination and domestic policy settings

Papua New Guinea

- Strategic Priority One: Domestic and regional security risks are better managed
- Strategic Priority Two: New Zealand companies have fair access to economic opportunities in PNG
- Strategic Priority Three: PNG makes and executes budgetary and policy decisions that support inclusive development

Samoa

- Strategic Priority One: Bilateral relationship and linkages, including Treaty of Friendship
- Strategic Priority Two: Regional leadership
- Strategic Priority Three: Economic growth, resilience and integration
- Strategic Priority Four: Institutions and government services

Solomon Islands

- Strategic Priority One: Social cohesion

- Strategic Priority Two: Economic decision-making and distribution
- Strategic Priority Three: Security

Tonga

- Strategic Priority One: Bilateral relationship and linkages
- Strategic Priority Two: Good governance
- Strategic Priority Three: Public sector services and capacity
- Strategic Priority Four: Economic growth, resilience and integration

Tuvalu

- Strategic Priority One: Climate change resilience and preparedness
- Strategic Priority Two: Government services and revenue
- Strategic Priority Three: Bilateral relationship and linkages

Vanuatu

- Strategic Priority One: Government services and revenue
- Strategic Priority Two: Economic prosperity
- Strategic Priority Three: Bilateral relationship and linkages