

From: NIUE

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To: NIUE; PACPF; DS PDG; DEVPP; UNHC

Cc: ...PACIFIC POSTS; ...POLICY DIVISIONS; CEO; DCE; FM.P/S MFA (Seemail); FM.P/S Associate MFA (Seemail); FM.DPMC (FPA) (Seemail)

Subject: FORMAL MESSAGE: Niue - Ambassador for Gender Equality visit and news steps on law review

[RESTRICTED]

RĀPOPOTO – SUMMARY

Ambassador for Gender Equality (Pacific)/Tuia Tāngata Louisa Wall has visited Niue for a series of meetings focused on women, decriminalisation of homosexuality and disabled persons rights.

Her visit provided a timely opportunity for Aotearoa to articulate its human rights priorities to a wide range of Niue stakeholders, and to obtain a clearer sense of Niue's views on what can be sensitive matters in the Pacific.

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)

HOHENGĀ – ACTION

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)

PŪRONGO – REPORT

2. A visit to Niue by **Tuia Tāngata, Louisa Wall**, was completed in August (7-14), with a wide range of stakeholders agreeing to meet Aotearoa New Zealand's Ambassador for Gender Equality (Pacific). Ambassador Wall's visit to Niue was an important opportunity for Aotearoa to state clearly its values and human rights priorities, including as articulated in the Human Rights Action Plan, and for both sides to listen to varied and strong viewpoints. HOM or DHOM accompanied Ambassador Wall to her calls, which allowed Post to gain fresh insights into Niue's position on a range of sensitive social policies.

3. All **Niue's women MPs** were absent at the time of the visit, at a parliamentary exchange for Pacific Women MPs hosted by New Zealand. While Ambassador Wall met with most of the Niue MPs

at the exchange, ahead of her departure for Niue, their absence affected opportunities to commend Niue on having 30 percent women representatives in the Assembly (six out of 20), and 50 percent in Cabinet (two of four Ministers).

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)

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s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)

An older generation of views

14. Wall's meeting with the **Niue Council of Women** (who are generally older women) saw an exchange of views about the church and its position on same sex relationships. Wall cited the empathetic positions of both Pope Francis and the Church of England's Archbishop of Canterbury towards LGBTQI people. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)

The next generation

15. Wall had a productive call with **young women leaders**, focused on opportunities for LGBTQI communities across sport and in women leadership on Niue. These women, representing Niue Police, Niue Tourism, sports organisations and village politics, spoke openly about Rainbow community friends and family, the lack of gender diverse education in school on Niue and the potential harm of social media. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)

Women's Health

16. Perhaps the most confronting matter raised by Ambassador Wall throughout the week were issues relating to women's sexual and reproductive health – access to lawful abortion and contraception to prevent abortion, sexual abuse including incest and sexual violence in the home. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)

For women on Niue, there is access to the morning after pill (on prescription, to those who request it) and there are referrals to New Zealand for abortion. This is treated with high levels of confidentiality.

17. Issues of importance for the Health team related to the lack of support for post-natal depression and broader mental health challenges for Niue's communities, including for school-aged students who identified with self-harm in the 2019 WHO Global School-based Health Survey.

Experience of school students

18. **At Niue High School,** s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)

students and families accept fa'afafine, based on the Niuean value of respect, was a common theme during Wall's calls. Acting Principal Moira Jackson shared Niue High School's strong support for inclusion of students with special needs, but raised the ongoing need to build teachers' expertise to support all students. DHOM outlined the support that Aotearoa New Zealand was providing to build teacher capacity in inclusive education. Senior students at a careers session learnt of Wall's journey representing New Zealand as a Silver Fern and a Black Fern, as well as her career as an MP.

19. During Wall's call with members of the **Niue Tolomaki Auloa Association (NTAA)**, Vice President Angela Tuhipa and member Richard Tuhipa identified the need to change outdated language to describe people with disabilities in Niuean legislation. This resonated with Wall, as did their emphasis to provide the tools, education and environment for children and adults with disabilities to have confidence in their identity and to enable them to represent their own community.

20. To this end, Wall raised the issue of outdated language with Birtha Lisimoni Tongahai, and the possibility of the Vagahau Niue Language Commission collaborating with NTAA to create new positive and empowering language. Wall also asked the Commission to research historic terms for the Takatapui LGBTQIA+ community. Terms could be included in a diversity and inclusion booklet, with Wall suggesting it could be launched in 2024 when Niue marks 50 years of self-government.

Churches

21. Post had sought a meeting with Niue's Council of Churches ahead of the visit, and although initially accepted, it was subsequently declined. We understand this s9(2)(g)(i)

was not directly related to the objectives of the visit. That said, almost all those met throughout the calls were lay preachers or regular church-goers, and were able to articulate the views of the main church, the Ekalesia Kerisiano Niue.

Takupu-Comment

22. A theme expressed across interlocutors – and robustly to Post after the visit – was that Niue was a tolerant society, accepting of all people with the caveat that LGBTQI people should exercise “discretion” with their families and in public. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)

23. Wall shared her view that discrimination against LGBTQI people was a legacy of colonisation, and a contributor to depopulation for Niue – given people from the Rainbow community tended to leave Niue because of societal and legal constraints on their ability to live openly and freely in their own country.

24. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)

Mutu-Ends

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