

**From:** [RAROTONGA](#)  
**To:** [PACPF](#); [DS PDG](#)  
**Cc:** [AMER](#); [AUS](#); [CEO](#); [DCE](#); [DEVECO](#); [DEVPP](#); [DS MLG](#); [FM.P/S MFA](#); [FM.DPMC \(FPA\)](#)  
s6(a) [LGL](#); [...PACIFIC POSTS](#); [PACMM](#); [PACREG](#); [UNHC](#)  
**Subject:** FORMAL MESSAGE: THE COOK ISLANDS: A NATIONAL PASSPORT?  
**Date:** Wednesday, 7 August 2024 4:30:20 pm

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[RESTRICTED]

**FORMAL MESSAGE: THE COOK ISLANDS: A NATIONAL PASSPORT?**

**Rāpopoto – ‘Akako’uko’u – Summary**

- Following his recent conversation with DPM/MFA Peters at PALM10, s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

We noted New Zealand’s strong interest in this issue, its potential implications for our constitutional relationship, and sought more information, including in the form of a letter to DPM/MFA Peters.

- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

**Hohenga – Rave’anga – Action**

For information

**Pūrongo – Tuatua ‘Akakite – Report**

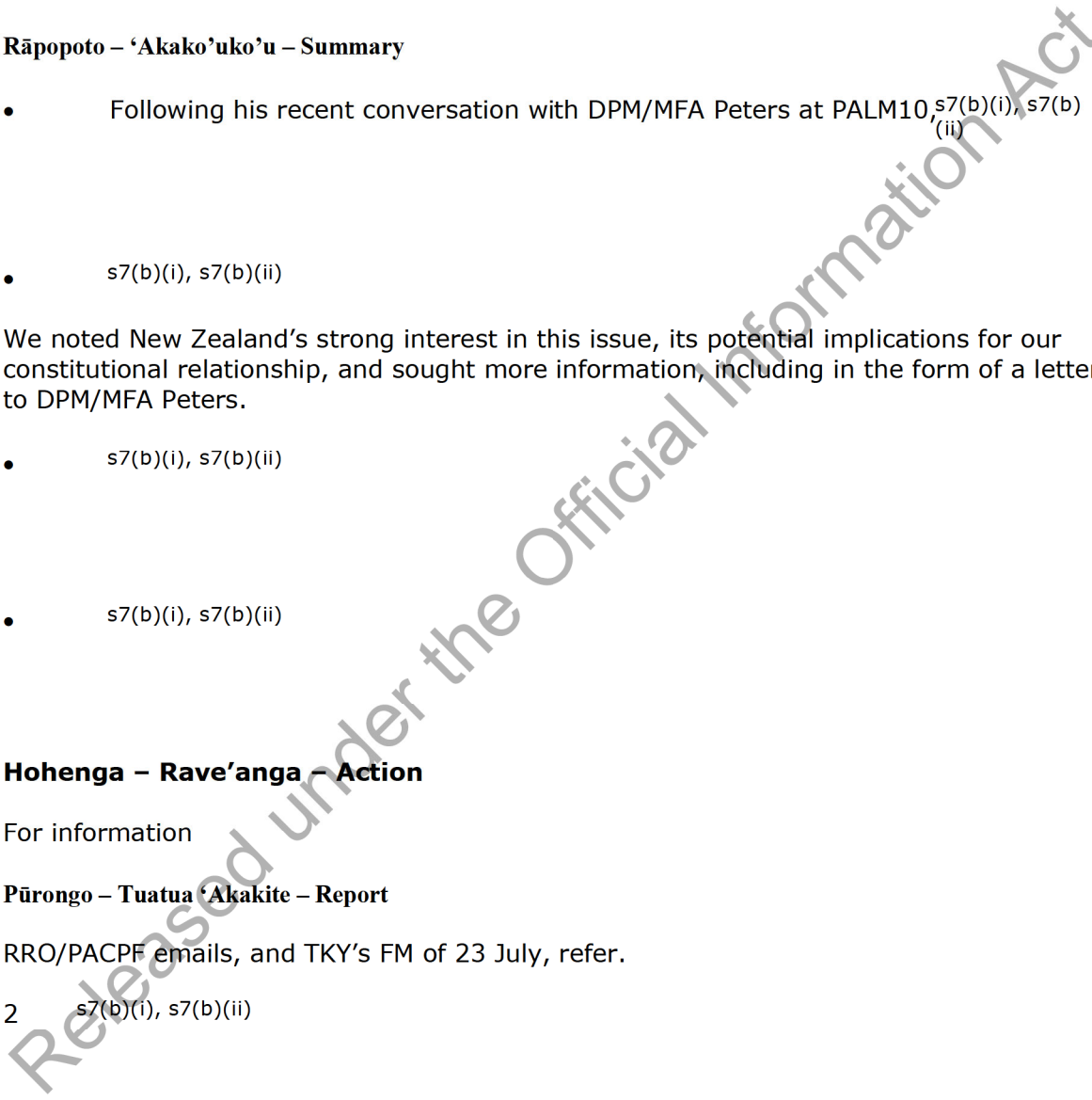
RRO/PACPF emails, and TKY’s FM of 23 July, refer.

- 2 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

**and work is already under way**

- 3 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)



4 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

5 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

6 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

7 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

8 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

9 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

10 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

11 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

12 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

13 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

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s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

14 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

15 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

16 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

**Tākupu – Tā Mātou Manako – Comment**

17 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

18 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

19 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

20 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

**Mutu – Oti - End**

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**From:** [PACPF](#)  
**To:** [RAROTONGA](#)  
**Cc:** [...PACIFIC POSTS](#); [PARIS](#); [WASHINGTON](#); [CANBERRA](#); [OTTAWA](#); [LONDON](#); [BEIJING](#); [NEW YORK](#); [GENEVA](#); [FM.DPMC \(FPA\)](#); [FM.DPMC \(NCPO\)](#) s6(a)  
[FM.Detence](#) s6(a) [DEVCO](#); [DEVPP](#); [PHM](#); [PACREG](#); [PACMM](#); [PACPr](#); [DS PDG](#); [DS MLG](#); [DS AAG](#); [CEO](#); [DCE](#); [NAU](#); [ISED](#); [LGL](#); [UNHC](#); [DS EMA](#); [EUR](#); [FM.P/S MFA](#)  
**Subject:** FORMAL MESSAGE: COOK ISLANDS: PM LUXON AND PM BROWN BILATERAL  
**Date:** Tuesday, 13 August 2024 7:22:07 pm

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[RESTRICTED]

## RĀPOPOTO – SUMMARY

The Prime Minister met Prime Minister Brown of the Cook Islands as he passed through Auckland on 12 August for their first encounter since taking office. Their conversation usefully traversed the range of regional issues <sup>Out of scope</sup> in the lead-up to what will be the Prime Minister Luxon's first Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting (PIFLM), coming out of PM Brown's year in the Chair. <sup>Out of scope</sup>

S/(D)(I), S/(D)(II)

## HOHENGĀ – ACTION

**RRO:** We will be interested in any reflections from MFAI on the meeting in due course. <sup>Out of scope</sup>

**Other Posts:** For information

## PŪRONGO – REPORT

1 Prime Minister Luxon met with Cook Islands Prime Minister Brown in Auckland on 12 August, while the latter was transiting through Auckland from the Forum Foreign Ministers Meeting (FFMM). This was their first meeting as Prime Ministers, though, as PM Luxon reminded, they had met previously when he had been CE of Air New Zealand and PM Brown had been Finance Minister. PM Brown was accompanied by Secretary of MFAI, Tapaeru Herrmann, and the new Deputy High Commissioner Amelia Fukofuka-Murae. The meeting was pitched primarily as an introductory meeting, to give the Prime Ministers the opportunity to get to renew their acquaintance in advance of the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting (PIFLM), and noting that they will have the opportunity to meet in a formal context under the new Leaders level architecture of the bilateral relationship (PACPF's FM 28 May refers).

2 <sup>Out of scope</sup>

3 Out of scope

4 Out of scope

5 Out of scope

6 Out of scope

7 Out of scope

8 Out of scope

9 In terms of the **bilateral relationship**, the key focus of the discussion, in

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response to PM Luxon's opening question, was the preparations for next year's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of self-government in free association, s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

10 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

11 Out of scope

12 Out of scope

13 Out of scope

**TAKUPU - COMMENT**

14 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

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**MUTU - ENDS**

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**From:** [RAROTONGA](#)  
**To:** [PACPF](#); [PACREG](#)  
**Cc:** s6(a) [FM.DPMC](#) ; s6(a) s6(a) [NEW](#)  
[YORK](#); [FM.Derence](#) [FM.Police](#) s6(a)  
[AMER](#); [CANBERRA](#); [RAROTONGA](#); [DCE](#); [CEO](#); [OCE](#); [NAD](#)  
**Subject:** FORMAL MESSAGE: HOM INTRODUCTORY MEETINGS WITH MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND IMMIGRATION  
**Date:** Tuesday, 24 September 2024 1:55:06 pm

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[RESTRICTED]

**FORMAL MESSAGE: HOM INTRODUCTORY MEETINGS WITH MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND IMMIGRATION**

**Rāpopoto – ‘Akako’uko’u – Summary**

HOM had warm and positive introductory calls on Minister of Foreign Affairs Tingika Elikana and Secretary of Foreign Affairs Tepaeru Herrmann on 11 September. The engagements were wide-ranging s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

traversing economic development needs, foreign policy priorities and milestones in the relationship between New Zealand and the Cook Islands including the impact of COVID. The 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of self-government in free association with New Zealand next year is seen as an opportunity to celebrate and advance our bilateral relationship including through reciprocal PM visits, announcing a new Joint Declaration, s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

**Hohenga – Rave’anga – Action**

For information

Out of scope

**Pūrongo – Tuatua ‘Akakite – Report**

Out of scope

2 Out of scope

3 Out of scope

4 Out of scope



Out of scope

5 Out of scope

6 Out of scope

7 Out of scope

8 Out of scope

*Meeting with Minister Elikana*

9 Out of scope

10 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

11 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

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12 Out of scope

13 Out of scope

14 Out of scope

**Tākupu – Tā Mātou Manako – Comment**

15 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

16 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

17 Out of scope

**Mutu – Oti – End**

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**From:** [PACPF](#)  
**To:** [RAROTONGA](#); [NIUE](#)  
**Cc:** [CEO](#); [OCE](#); [DCE](#); [DS PDG](#); [...POLICY DIVISIONS](#); [...PACIFIC POSTS](#); Out of scope, s6(a)  
[FM.DPMC \(FPA\)](#) [FM.P/S MFA](#) Out of scope, [FM.DPMC](#) [FM.Detence](#)  
[FM.Internal Affairs](#) Out of scope, s6(a)  
[MCCALLUM, Bruce \(PACPF\)](#); [HIGGINS, Don \(PACPF\)](#); s6(a)  
**Subject:** FORMAL MESSAGE: s6(a) COOK ISLANDS PASSPORTS - MEETING WITH COOK ISLANDS HIGH COMMISSIONER TO NZ  
**Date:** Saturday, 19 October 2024 9:30:57 pm  
**Attachments:** [MFA Peters letter to PM Brown - 27 September 2024.pdf](#)  
[Updated talking points Cook Islands](#) <sup>s7(b)(i), s7</sup> [Passports and UN - 19 October 2024.docx](#)

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[RESTRICTED]

[FOR CABLE EXCHANGE]

### ĀPITIHINGA – ATTACHMENTS

- Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rt Hon Winston Peters', [letter](#) to Prime Minister Hon Mark Brown – dated 27 September 2024.
- Updated talking points.

### TOHUTOHU KAWE – HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

s6(a)

DIA: Chamberlain

### RĀPOPOTO – SUMMARY

PACPF DM met with the Cook Islands High Commissioner on Wednesday 8 October to hand over a copy of the letter from Minister Peters to Prime Minister Brown and to reinforce its key messages regarding PM Brown's proposals for a Cook Islands passport  
Out of scope

We underlined the seriousness of our concerns, in the context of our constitutional relationship, shared citizenship <sup>s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)</sup> As the Cook Islands High Commissioner in New Zealand, we wanted to ensure that she was fully aware of the seriousness with which both Minister Peters and our Prime Minister regarded these issues, and the reason therefore for Minister Peters taking the significant step of addressing these concerns in writing to Prime Minister Brown.

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

Out of scope

In preparation for HOM's next meeting with Foreign Secretary Hermann we [attach](#) updated talking points. You will also be aware of the Minister's [recent remarks](#) to the media (various emails refer).

### HOHENGA – ACTION

- **RRO:** Please find attached key points to support your upcoming engagement with Foreign Secretary Herrmann. While we understand the purpose of this meeting is to discuss planning for the Joint Ministerial Working Group, this is the first time you will have had the opportunity to engage with Hermann on the Minister's letter.

Out of scope

## **PŪRONGO – REPORT**

1 After delays due to the High Commissioner's availability, on Wednesday 8 October, PACPF (Coombs and Hyndman) met with the Cook Islands High Commissioner (Samuela), Deputy High Commissioner (Fukofuka-Murare), and First Secretary (Arthur). The purpose of the meeting was to formally hand over a copy of Minister Peter's letter to Prime Minister Brown (PACPF FM of 2 Oct refers) and to emphasise the seriousness of his concerns, and those of Prime Minister Luxon, as set out in the letter. The meeting was held at MFAT offices, at our request. The tone of the meeting was serious but cordial. The High Commissioner confirmed that she had received a copy of the letter from MFAI. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

We went through each of the issues in the Minister's letter in turn.

### ***A Cook Islands 'passport' – a PM Brown deliverable for 60<sup>th</sup> Constitution Day***

2 PACPF DM recalled that PM Brown had first raised his proposal for a Cook Islands passport with Minister Peters at PALM10 in July, and then with Prime Minister Luxon in Auckland on 12 August (RRO FM 7 Aug and PACPF FM 13 Aug refer). On both these occasions, and subsequently by officials, we had indicated the proposal raised significant questions for our constitutional relationship and had requested more information in writing so that we could respond accordingly. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

PACPF DM explained that the Minister thought it important to provide New Zealand's views in writing so that our position, which was based on our constitutional relationship and shared citizenship, was clearly understood by the Cook Islands. PACPF DM elaborated that if the Cook Islands Government wished to establish a national identity card for domestic purposes, then that is a matter for the Cook Islands to consider. A passport however would raise fundamental questions for our constitutional relationship. These are questions that ultimately the Cook Islands people would need to address.

3 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

### ***PM Brown goes public on the passports***

4 You will be aware that PM Brown has now referred publicly to his idea of a Cook Islands passport in his opening address at the House of the Ariki General Meeting, and that Minister Peters responded to a question by the media following this. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

We welcome RRO's ongoing efforts in s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

Out of scope

Out of scope

10 **Comment:** As reported by RRO previously, s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

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Out of scope

**Next steps: RRO to engage**

17 Grateful that RRO engage with Secretary Herrmann on these issues at your next meeting. We provide the attached refined talking points to reiterate the key messages that you have already delivered to Prime Minister Brown, s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

**TAKUPU – COMMENT**

18 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

Out of scope

Out of scope

**MUTU – ENDS**

Out of scope

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# Rt Hon Winston Peters

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**Deputy Prime Minister**

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Minister for Racing



27 September 2024

Hon Mark Brown  
Prime Minister  
Cook Islands

Dear Prime Minister

It has been a pleasure to see you in recent months, including in Tokyo and Nuku'alofa.

We are looking forward to marking the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Cook Islands self-government in free association with New Zealand next year. Our relationship has developed and succeeded over the last 60 years because of the willingness of our Governments and leaders to engage in open and frank dialogue. This recognises the strength that comes from our shared culture, history and people, and desire to work in true partnership. The reflections in this letter are shared in that spirit.

It has been useful for the New Zealand Government to hear some of your thoughts on Cook Islands' initiatives to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, including the proposal to create a Cook Islands passport. Given the constitutional significance of some of these suggestions, we thought it important to offer some feedback in writing.

As we approach the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, it is a timely moment to reflect on our constitutional relationship. The Free Association model established between New Zealand and the Cook Islands and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly on 16 December 1965 (GA Resolution 2064(XX)), is an inherently flexible concept. It has allowed our relationship to naturally progress and evolve over time. The Cook Islands has exercised self-governance under its Constitution and grown its interaction with the international community at its own pace while retaining a foundational constitutional connection with New Zealand.

As members of the Realm of New Zealand, we share a sovereign citizenship and owe constitutional responsibilities to one another. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

Our relationship has benefitted from the flexibility and unique character of Free Association and New Zealand remains committed to it. While flexible, Free Association and membership of the Realm of New Zealand has limits. Under international law, it is constitutionally distinct from full sovereignty and independence. If and when the Cook Islands wished to contemplate fundamental change towards full sovereignty and independence, New Zealand would stand ready to engage on that. We recognise that this is rightly a question for the Cook Islands Government and its people. As has been the practice with major constitutional changes in New Zealand, we would expect any fundamental evolution to the Cook Islands' relationship



with New Zealand would need to be subject to a referendum process involving the people of the Cook Islands.

In this context, we noted your intention to create a national identity card or Cook Islands passport next year. The creation of a national identity card is a question for the Cook Islands Government. However, the establishment of a passport is a separate question as passports flow from citizenship. The New Zealand Government is responsible for the passports of New Zealand citizens and these passports are governed by New Zealand law. A Cook Islands passport would raise fundamental questions for our constitutional relationship and shared citizenship.

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s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Winston Peters". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rt Hon Winston Peters  
**Minister of Foreign Affairs**

CC: Rt Hon Christopher Luxon, Prime Minister of New Zealand

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## Updated key points for Cooks Islands on <sup>s6(a)</sup> passports and upcoming meetings.

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Out of scope

### **Contents of the letter from Deputy Prime Minister Peters**

- Note you have been looking forward to the opportunity to speak to Secretary Herrmann about this letter, and that you are pleased the colleagues in Wellington were able to discuss this with High Commissioner Samuela.
- Note that PM Brown first raised in passing the Cook Islands' proposed initiatives for the 60th anniversary with Minister Peters when they met at the PALM 10 meeting in July, and then again with PM Luxon when they first met in person in August.
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

### **Passports**

- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- A Cook Islands passport would raise fundamental questions for our constitutional relationship and shared citizenship. We are also concerned that a Cook Islands passport risks misrepresenting the nature of our constitutional relationship.
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
  
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

- When it comes to issues of mutual concern in our relationship, s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

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**From:** [PACPF](#)  
**To:** [RAROTONGA](#); [PACPF](#)  
**Cc:** [CEO](#); [DCE](#); [DS AAG](#); [DS PDG](#); [DS MLG](#); [FM.DPMC \(FPA\)](#) [FM.P/S MFA](#) [...PACIFIC](#)  
[POSTS](#); [PACREG](#); [LGL](#); [LONDON](#); [UNHC](#); [WASHINGTON](#); [NAU](#); [BEIJING](#); [PRD](#); [FM.Derence](#)  
s6(a) [FM.P/S Associate MFA](#) [FM.Secretary of Cabinet](#)  
**Subject:** FORMAL MESSAGE: MINISTER PETERS' LETTER AND Out of scope  
**Date:** Friday, 8 November 2024 4:32:28 pm  
**Attachments:** [Diaspora Consultations Public Notice.jpg](#)

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[RESTRICTED]

Out of scope

## RĀPOPOTO – SUMMARY

Out of scope

Public notices issued this week by the High Commission promoting the consultations indicated that, in addition to deep sea mining, the consultations would cover the Cook Islands' 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of self-government. Given a Cook Islands passport is one of PM Brown's initiatives for the 60<sup>th</sup> (and has garnered significant media attention in the Rarotonga and New Zealand), we can expect it will be discussed.

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

Out of scope

## HOHENGANGA – ACTION

**RRO:** to note s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii) a call between DS PDG and Secretary Herrmann has been sought via the Cook Islands High Commission.

## PŪRONGO – REPORT

1. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

2. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

3. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

Out of scope

**TĀKUPU - COMMENT**

8. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

9. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

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**MUTU - ENDS**

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**To:** [PACPF](#)  
**Cc:** [CEQ; DCE; DS AAG; DS PDG; DS MLG; FM.DPMC \(FPA\)](#) [FM.P/S MFA](#) [...PACIFIC](#)  
[POSTS; PACREG; LGL; LONDON; UNHC; WASHINGTON; NAU; BEIJING; PRD; FM.Derence](#)  
[s6\(a\)](#) [FM.P/S Associate MFA](#) [FM.Secretary of Cabinet](#)  
**Subject:** FORMAL MESSAGE: RESPONSE TO MINISTER PETERS' LETTER OF 27 SEPTEMBER  
**Date:** Tuesday, 12 November 2024 12:09:05 pm  
**Attachments:** [MFAI NV 98 2024-25 CKI PM Brown Letter to DPM Peters - NZHC.pdf](#)  
[PM Brown to DPM Peters November 2024.pdf](#)

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### Hohenga – Rave'anga – Action

For information

### Pūrongo – Tuatua 'Akakite – Report

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii) a response to Deputy Prime Minister Peters' letter of 27 September.

2 We attach a letter from Prime Minister Brown to Deputy Prime Minister Peters, cc'ing Prime Minister Luxon, which we received via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration at 4pm on Sunday (CKT).

**Mutu – Oti - End**

Attachments withheld in full under s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii).

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s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

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s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

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## Media lines: NZ's views on Cook Islands passports, Out of scope

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### **NZ's position if the Cook Islands wish to change constitutional relationship**

*Note these points apply for all three issues below as each would require fundamental changes to our constitutional relationship*

- New Zealand values the current 'Free Association' relationship with the Cook Islands. If the Cook Islands Government wants to change the relationship and take a formal step towards full sovereignty and independence, New Zealand stands ready to engage.
- As has been the practice with major constitutional changes in New Zealand, we would expect any fundamental change to the Cook Islands' relationship with New Zealand would be fully consulted with the people of the Cook Islands.

### **Cook Islands passports**

- The New Zealand government is aware of a proposal to create a Cook Islands passport. We look forward to hearing directly from the Cook Islands Government on the details.
- New Zealand and the Cook Islands enjoy a special constitutional relationship, which includes shared citizenship. The creation of a Cook Islands passport would have implications for that special relationship and would require careful consideration and discussion.
- Passports are linked to citizenship. The New Zealand Government is responsible for the passports of New Zealand citizens and these passports are governed by New Zealand law.

Out of scope

- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

IN CONFIDENCE

**PACPF working lunch with the Cook Islands High Commission**  
**25 July 2024 – 12.00 – 1.30pm**

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POLI-82-3700

IN CONFIDENCE

IN CONFIDENCE

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Out of scope

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

- Rachel and Alex opened this topic by referencing the chat between PM Brown and MFA at PALM10, asking HC about whether there was more information they could share on the proposals. To which, Amelia noted that they had yet to receive a proper readout about what was discussed, but they were aware of PM Brown's proposals.
- Alex spoke about the complexities of introducing a passport and how it raises fundamental questions about our constitutional relationship between the two countries due to direct links to citizenship.
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
  
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

POLI-82-3700

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- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

- Alex signalled that the team would include context about this request for PM Luxon's briefing, ahead of a meeting with PM Brown. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii) acknowledged that this, and noted that a lot of what's to be discussed today, will likely be key issues raised by PM Brown.

- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

Out of scope

IN CONFIDENCE

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POLI-82-3700

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IN CONFIDENCE

**HOM Introductory calls 10 September 2024**

**Key points**

Out of scope

- Note you are aware of some of **Cook Islands priorities for the upcoming 60<sup>th</sup>** including:
  - s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
  - **A national identity passport** – seek an update on whether there is written information on this initiative to share with NZ yet, as sought by PM Luxon during his meeting with PM Brown.

Reiterate that this initiative does raise fundamental constitutional questions and understanding what is intended will be critical.

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## Talking points meeting with Cook Islands High Commissioner Samuela and Divisional Manager Jane Coombs

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2.00-2.30pm

8 October 2024

Room 17-13, HSBC

Attendees from MFAT: Jane Coombs and Ilagi Hyndman

### Objective

- To hand over MFA's letter to PM Brown in person to the High Commissioner s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

### Talking points

- Thank you for coming in to see me. I wanted to personally hand over a copy of the letter from the Deputy Prime Minister Peters to Prime Minister Brown dated 27 September 2024 and to go through the contents of the letter with you, so you understand our position.
- We have appreciated the Cook Islands' engagement on planning for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year. We are looking forward to marking the occasion with the Cook Islands.
- Prime Minister Brown first raised the proposed Cook Islands passport and honours system with Minister Peters when they met at the PALM 10 meeting in July. We have asked for more detail on these proposals s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii) this letter sets out our response to the proposals as we understand them.

### Passports

- As we discussed when we met together in July, a Cook Islands passport would raise fundamental questions for our constitutional relationship and shared citizenship. We have heard different views on the proposal: it has been called a national identity card as well as a passport. Given we understand a committee has been convened to work on this proposal, we think it's useful to have the New Zealand position clearly set out in this letter.

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Out of scope

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## Briefing for call with Tapaeru Herrmann, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Cook Islands, Tuesday 12 November, 3pm

### Biography



Herrmann was appointed to her fourth term as Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Immigration in September – she was first appointed in 2015. Before this, she was Deputy High Commissioner in New Zealand from 2011-2015 (notably including overseeing the Wellington-based celebrations for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary). From 2003-2011 she was Director of the International and Trade Division. From 2000- 2003, Herrmann was the Acting Chief Executive at the Cook Islands Development Investment Board. s9(2)(a)

You last met her in Russell at the JMF.

### Objectives

- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- Out of scope

### Talking points

- Thank Herrmann for being available for a call – being able to pick up the phone to discuss shared issues of concern is something we value in the relationship.
- Note that you are looking forward to the upcoming JMF Working Group and JDAS. Looking ahead, the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary presents a valuable opportunity to elevate our relationship and reflect on how we want our partnership to operate.

### Passport proposal

- Note that you sought this call to reinforce:
  - The s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii) **concern** felt in Wellington regarding PM Brown's proposal for a Cook Islands passport, as articulated in DPM Peters' letter; and
  - s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

- Note that it is good to have the Cook Islands' response to DPM Peters' letter.
- Emphasise that we now understand the proposal is to create Cook Islands citizenship. This is a very significant suggestion and we need time to process it. Offer some immediate reactions:
  - Since its creation, the Realm of New Zealand has had one sovereign and one citizenship. This is a **foundational constitutional concept**.
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- This proposal requires **deliberate, detailed bilateral engagement** with New Zealand. It cannot be progressed unilaterally.
  - s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii) Citizenship goes hand-in-hand with full independence and sovereignty. In 1965 the Cook Islands chose Free Association rather than full independence. If a further act of self-determination were to take place, that would be the appropriate moment for the Cook Islands to create its own citizenship.
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

Out of scope

Released under the Official Information Act

Out of scope

○ Out of scope

● Out of scope

PACPF/RRO/PACREG/LGL/NAD

November 2024

Released under the Official Information Act

## Meeting Brief: Hon Mark Brown, Prime Minister, Cook Islands

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Time and date (NZT): **Date**



Hon Mark Brown was appointed Prime Minister in 2020. He is the Leader of the Cook Islands Party, which was re-elected in 2022 for a four-year term. Prime Minister Brown holds the Ministerial responsibilities for Finance and Economic Management, Attorney General, Public Service Commission, Police, Seabed Minerals Authority, Tourism, Energy and Renewable Energy Outer Island Special Projects and Telecommunications. Prime Minister Brown is in New Zealand to undertake community consultations on deep sea mining and 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary plans.

Population: 14,800 (June 2023)  
 GDP (PPP, per capita): \$24,040  
 Inflation (%): 13

NZ exports (NZ\$/yr): 152.5m (2022/23)  
 NZ imports (NZ\$/yr): 1.29m (2022/23)  
 Next elections: 2026

### Key objectives

- Communicate clearly that New Zealand does not support the proposed Cook Islands citizenship and passport. This proposal would require a major shift in our constitutional relationship and s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

### Talking points

- Out of scope
- Out of scope
- Out of scope
- Emphasise the **value New Zealand places on our special constitutional relationship**. It has brought immense shared benefits, as well as mutual responsibilities.

*Cook Islands citizenship and passport proposal.*

- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- **New Zealand does not, and will not, support such a proposal.**
- The Realm of New Zealand has one sovereign and one citizenship. This is a **foundational concept** that underpins the Realm and our free association model.
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii) is to have a document that conveys Cook Islands identity, then an option is a **national identity card**. That would avoid the constitutional, practical and financial implications of a separate passport and citizenship.

*Constitutional status*

- Note that in 1965, the **Cook Islands chose free association** rather than full independence. While this model has allowed our partnership to evolve over the years, it has limits.
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii) the creation of citizenship is intrinsically linked to an act of independence, and therefore **risks disrupting the existing free association relationship and the ongoing right of Cook Islanders to New Zealand citizenship by birth**. Such a move needs to be subject to a referendum.

Out of scope

Out of scope

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- Out of scope

## Background

### New Zealand support to the Cook Islands

1 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

2 Out of scope

3 Out of scope

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

4 s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

5 New Zealand considers shared citizenship a foundational constitutional concept that underpins the Realm of New Zealand and our free association relationship. The proposal to create a Cook Islands citizenship would be a significant change to the current model. We consider such a consequential decision should require a referendum of the Cook Islands people.

6 s9(2)(g)(i)

s9(2)(g)(i)

7 s9(2)(g)(i)

8 Out of scope

9 Out of scope

10 Out of scope

11 Out of scope

12 s9(2)(g)(i)

Pacific Polynesia and French Pacific Division/ Legal Division  
15 November 2024



**From:** [PACPF](#)  
**To:** [RAROTONGA](#); [PACPF](#)  
**Cc:** [CEO](#); [OCE](#); [DCE](#); [DS AAG](#); [DS PDG](#); [DS MLG](#); [FM.DPMC \(FPA\) \(Seemail\)](#); [FM.P/S MFA](#) [FM.P/S Associate MFA](#) [...PACIFIC POSTS](#); [PACREG](#); [PACMM](#); [DEVECO](#); [DEVPP](#); [LGL](#); [LONDON](#); [UNHC](#); [PARIS](#); [WASHINGTON](#); [NAD](#); [BEIJING](#); [PRD](#); [CAE](#); [MEDIA](#); [FM.Defence](#) s6(a)  
[FM.Secretary of Cabinet](#) [FM.Internal Affairs](#) s6(a) [FM.DPMC](#)  
s6(a)  
**Subject:** FORMAL MESSAGE: COOK ISLANDS: PM BROWN MEETINGS AT THE BEEHIVE: PASSPORTS s6(a)  
**Date:** Wednesday, 27 November 2024 9:25:44 am  
**Attachments:** [Summary meeting Cook Islands Herrmann with Bernadette DS PDG and Coombs PACPF 18 Nov 24.docx](#)  
[DPM Peters letter to PM Brown November 2024.pdf](#)

[RESTRICTED]

## ĀPITIHINGA – ATTACHMENT

- Summary of meeting with Cook Islands Foreign Affairs Secretary Tapaeru Hermann – 18 November 2024
- A letter from Deputy Prime Minister Peters to Prime Minister Brown, dated 25 November 2024.

## RĀPOPOTO – SUMMARY

On Tuesday 19 November, Prime Minister Luxon and Deputy Prime Minister Peters met the Cook Islands Prime Minister Mark Brown and delivered strong and clear messages on New Zealand's position on the Cook Islands proposal to create a Cook Islands citizenship and passport, <sup>Out of scope</sup>

PM Luxon and DPM Peters <sup>s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)</sup> advised PM Brown that Cook Islands citizenship and a passport was not possible under our current free association relationship; one citizenship is a foundational concept of the Realm. <sup>s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)</sup>

Out of scope

## HOHENGANGA – ACTION

- **RRO:** Grateful if Post could relay the attached letter from DPM Peters which responds to PM Brown's letter received 6 November. We also attach for your awareness a summary of a meeting between DS PDG and PACPF DM on 18 November (preceding the Ministerial meetings).

## **PŪRONGO – REPORT**

1 Prime Minister Brown is in New Zealand for public consultations with the Cook Islands diaspora on deep seabed mining and 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary plans (PACPF FM 7 Nov refers). <sup>s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)</sup>

Out of scope

In back-to-back meetings, PM Brown met first with Deputy Prime Minister Peters and then with Prime Minister Luxon. This report draws thematically from both meetings. PM Brown was accompanied by Secretary Herrmann and High Commissioner Kairangi Samuela.

### ***Citizenship and passports***

2 PM Brown set out his proposal for Cook Islands citizenship and passports as one of his initiatives to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of self-government in free association with New Zealand next year. <sup>s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)</sup>

3 PM Luxon responded that the proposal was in the arena of independence and beyond what is possible in a free association relationship. He said that passports were representative of citizenship for independent states and that New Zealand does not consider the Cook Islands to be fully independent and sovereign. PM Luxon posited if the issue was growing national identity, then a national identity card would seem to suffice. <sup>s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)</sup>

4 Both PM Luxon and Minister Peters emphasised that PM Brown's proposal was constitutionally unworkable. Minister Peters said several times the proposal affects the constitutional relationship and is therefore of such significance that it is "for the people to decide, not politicians" and would need a referendum in the Cook Islands. <sup>s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)</sup>

5 While accepting evolution in our free association relationship had occurred over time, PM Luxon emphasised that the creation of a new citizenship and a passport would not be simply further evolution. To New Zealand this would be akin to independence. Several times PM Luxon sought to understand whether through this proposal PM Brown was signalling a desire for full independence from New Zealand. He reiterated that while New Zealand strongly valued our free association relationship with the Cook Islands, if the Cook Islands wanted to seek full independence, we were open to discussing that. <sup>s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)</sup>

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

6

Out of scope

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Out of scope

Out of scope

## **TĀKUPU – COMMENT**

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

It was important to take this opportunity to relay, in the clearest terms and at leader level, that New Zealand has no intention of entertaining a passport or citizenship within the current constitutional relationship. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

Given any evolution or change to the constitutional relationship requires mutual agreement, s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

New Zealand's position on this issue is clear and long held, we will not be seeking to negotiate it.

Out of scope

Out of scope

**MUTU - ENDS**

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**Summary note on meeting with Cook Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration Secretary Tapaeru Herrmann – 18 November 2024**

- Bernadette and I met with MFAI Secretary Tapaeru Herrmann yesterday evening. The meeting ran for over an hour and a half. This is therefore not a full read out.
- Out of scope
  
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Out of scope

Out of scope

- Out of scope

- Out of scope

- Out of scope

- Out of scope With the one key point being the Cook Islands stated desire to retain NZ citizenship, s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

Out of scope

- s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii) for officials to continue to discuss these issues at the upcoming JMF Working Group (28-29 November), and then Ministers at the JMF in the first quarter of 2025. s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

- Out of scope

Jane Coombs  
18 November 2024

Released under the Official Information Act



# Rt Hon Winston Peters

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**Deputy Prime Minister**

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Minister for Racing



25 November 2024

Hon Mark Brown  
Prime Minister  
**COOK ISLANDS**

Dear Prime Minister

Thank you for your letter dated 6 November 2024. We greatly appreciated the opportunity to meet you on 19 November 2024 to further discuss the proposals in your letter, namely the creation of a Cook Islands citizenship and passport.

As discussed during our recent meeting, like the Cook Islands, New Zealand deeply values our unique bilateral relationship and wants it to continue to flourish.

However, as was made clear during your meetings in the Beehive on 19 November, the New Zealand Government cannot support your proposal for a Cook Islands citizenship and passport. The Realm of New Zealand has one sovereign and one citizenship. This is a foundational concept that underpins the Realm and our free association model.

Any proposal to change this foundational concept would need to be agreed in partnership with New Zealand and would need to be put to the people of the Cook Islands through a referendum. The New Zealand Government's approach to this matter would also be carefully scrutinised in our own political system and be subject to challenge from a range of stakeholders. It would therefore be a requirement for such a matter of constitutional significance to also be taken to the New Zealand Cabinet for agreement.

The New Zealand-Cook Islands relationship has thrived over many years, through the careful and mature management of challenging issues via respectful consultation, and we are confident that it will continue to do so.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Winston Peters'.

Rt Hon Winston Peters  
**Minister of Foreign Affairs**

CC: Rt Hon Christopher Luxon, Prime Minister of New Zealand  
Hon Tingika Elikana, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Cook Islands