

Niue's 50th Self-Government Anniversary Celebration

The Honourable Speaker and Parliament of the Cook Islands received an invitation to attend the 50th Anniversary celebration of Niue by the Speaker of Niue Assembly, Honourable Hima Douglas, held on Saturday 19 October 2024. The invitation was extended to the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the Niue Government and was gratefully accepted. With the invitation received, Parliament of the Cook Islands chartered a flight with Air Rarotonga to travel to Niue for the celebration.

The Cook Islands delegation who attended the celebration include the Honourable Prime Minister Mark Brown and Mrs Daphne Brown, Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister Responsible for the Parliament of the Cook Islands Tingika Elikana and Mrs Teatuanui Elikana, Honourable Speaker Tai Tura, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Mr Vaitoti Tupa, Members of Parliament Mrs Agnes Armstrong, Mr Toanui Isamaela and Mr Tim Varu, Parliamentary Staff Member Papaterai William and Officials from the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There were 11 members from the Niue Community in the Cook Islands who also attended the celebration.

Upon arriving in Niue, the Government Officials received a warm welcome from the Foreign Affairs of Niue, whereas the Parliamentary Officials were greeted by the Clerk and Assistant Clerk of Niue Assembly. Following this, the Cook Islands delegation was invited to participate in a gathering hosted by the Cook Islands Community of Niue. Upon reaching the venue, the Cook Islanders currently residing in Niue offered a warm welcome to all the delegates. While the Government of Niue invited the Honourable Prime Minister and the Minister to the official welcoming dinner, the Honourable Tingika Elikana and the Honourable Prime Minister attended the exclusive event arranged by the Cook Islands Community of Niue.

The Cook Islands delegation from Rarotonga commenced the evening with a lively string band performance, followed by a gracious welcome message by the host. Next, the delegates relished a scrumptious meal featuring Niuean cuisine, including the main dish of the night, kaveu (unga). After dinner, the Honourable Prime Minister Mark Brown, on behalf of the Cook Islands, delivered a speech recognising the Niue community's hospitality and congratulated them on the 50th Anniversary. He mentioned the continued fundraising plan for constructing a Niue Hall in Rarotonga and invited the Niue Community to the Cook Islands' 60th Anniversary celebration in 2025. Additionally, the Prime Minister highlighted that the Cook Islands was exploring the possibility of introducing its passports to enable Cook Islanders to establish their true identity.

The Official Programme slated for 10 a.m. on Saturday, 19 October 2024, faced a delay due to heavy rainfall. Consequently, it commenced at 12 p.m. The Government of Niue and Niue Assembly coordinated the proceedings held at Niue International Airport's parking area, where the Honourable Speaker of Niue Assembly, Hima Douglas and his wife greeted all VIP delegates attending from New Zealand, Australia, China, Fiji, the Cook Islands and other Pacific Nations. On arrival, Cook Islands' Members of Parliament were ushered to a VIP tent, with a special welcome accorded to the Honourable Prime Minister Mark Brown and his wife, Daphne Brown. The official ceremony commenced with the Niue flag-raising, led by New Zealand's Governor-General Dame Cindy Kiro and the Prime Minister of Niue, Honourable

Dalton Tagelagi. Following this, hymns performed by the Niue Youth Choir were followed by speeches delivered by both dignitaries. The 50th Anniversary of Niue's self-government was commemorated by cutting the cake. Subsequently, the Speaker of Niue Assembly presented special awards to noteworthy individuals from the local community for their outstanding contributions, including Honourable Billy Talagi. After the award ceremony, the 50th Anniversary event ended officially, and various Niuean groups entertained the attendees with traditional dance performances. The festivities continued late into the night, with the Cook Islands team invited to showcase their talents. During the Cook Islands presentation, the Prime Minister presented a gift to the Prime Minister of Niue.

Niue gained self-government in free association with New Zealand on 19 October 1974, after more than 60 years under colonial rule. Since then, the island has enjoyed a unique status as a self-governing nation whose citizens are also New Zealand citizens. Niue's 50th self-government anniversary was a momentous occasion, and the Cook Islands' representation was a testament to the deep-rooted relationship shared by the two island nations. The visit was an opportunity for the Cook Islands and Niue to celebrate their close relationship, cultural exchange, and diplomacy.



The Official Programme for Saturday 19 October 2024 was supposed to start at 10 a.m. Due to the heavy rain, the programme was delayed to begin at midday 12 p.m. Facilitated by the Government of Niue and Niue Assembly, the programme started off at 12 p.m. in the parking space of the International Airport of Niue, the Honourable Speaker of Niue Assembly Hima Douglas welcomed all VIP Delegates from New Zealand including the Governor General HE Cindy

Kiro, Australia, the Cook Islands, Fiji, China, and other Pacific Nations. Members of Parliament from the Cook Islands were escorted to a VIP tent, with a special welcome for the Honourable Prime Minister of the Cook Islands Mark Brown and his wife, Daphne Brown. The official event begun with the raising of the flag of Niue by the Head Boy/Girl and Deputy Head Boy/Girl of Niue High School, led by Her Excellency Cindy Kiro, Prime Minister of Niue Honourable Dalton Tagelagi, and Honourable Speaker of the Niue Assembly Hima Douglas, in which speeches were delivered following the raising of the flag and hymns sung by the Niue Youth Choir. Afterwards, there was a cutting of the cake to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Niue self-government. Following the cutting of the cake, a special award ceremony took place where special candidates from the community was awarded with a special award by the Speaker of Niue Assembly, for their outstanding work in the Community.



Following the awards ceremony, was the official closing of the 50th Anniversary event, followed by special Niue dancing from various groups. This celebration lasted until late at night, when the Cook Islands team were invited to put up a show. The Prime Minister then proposed to present a gift to the Prime Minister of Niue during the Cook Islands show.

Honourable Speaker Tai Tura and Papaterai William met with the Honourable Speaker of Niue Assembly at 8.30 a.m. the next morning, at the Parliamentary precinct. The meeting began with introductions and an overview provided by Honourable Hima Douglas regarding the functions, processes, movements, and future plans of Niue Assembly. Honourable Hima Douglas discussed the new Parliament building's historical context and offered insight into the Constitution of Niue, inquiring whether changes had been made to the Cook Islands Constitution, as this had been their first amendment. In response, Papaterai William explained that the Cook Islands Constitution was undergoing amendments and was currently in a public consultation phase, with three significant changes.

Towards the end of the meeting, a tour of the Administration Office was conducted by Honourable Hima Douglas before all parties proceeded to the Chamber to meet with Members of Parliament Mr Vaitoti Tupa and Mrs Agnes Armstrong. As a gesture of appreciation for the special invitation extended to the Cook Islands Parliament for the 50th Anniversary of Niue, Papaterai William presented a handmade rito handicraft gift (made by Nanave Goodwin) in a wooden frame to Honourable Tai Tura. The gift was presented to the Speaker of Niue as a token of gratitude for the invitation and warm hospitality received. In return, Honourable Tai Tura invited the Speaker of Niue and the Niuean Parliament to the Cook Islands' 60th Anniversary Celebration in 2025, an invitation that Honourable Hima Douglas graciously accepted. This marked the conclusion of the meeting with the Speaker of Niue Assembly.



Regrettably, this marked the conclusion of the visit to Niue. Due to Air Rarotonga's requirement to return to Rarotonga and resume regular flight operations, the Cook Islands team assembled at Niue International Airport to complete the check-in process. The Cook Islands Community of Niue and Honourable Prime Minister Dalton Tagelagi bid farewell to the departing team.

A special thanks to the Deputy Clerk of the Parliament of the Cook Islands for arranging the chartered flight and to the Cook Islands delegation for attending the 50th Anniversary celebration in Niue. The Cook Islands will now be preparing for their 60th Anniversary in 2025 and have extended an invitation to Niue to attend the celebration.