



An end of year message from the Chief Executive of the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, Dr Colin Tukuitonga

Fakaalofa lahi atu, Talofa lava, Malo e lelei, Bula vinaka, Kia Orana, Taloha ni, Kia ora and season's greetings.

As the year draws to a close I would like to extend both my best wishes for a happy, blessed and relaxing Christmas break, and my thanks for supporting us during a year of transition. It is also an opportunity to reflect on 2008, and share with you some of our highlights. To save money, and the environment, we are doing this electronically.

One of our best wins in 2008 occurred earlier this month, when we welcomed a timely drop in the cost of sending money "home" to the Pacific. Remitting money is a regular part of life for Pacific people in New Zealand, and historically they have paid dearly to do so. Costs have ranged from \$15-\$25 for every \$100 sent.

Since mid-2007 we have led the **NZ Pacific Remittance Project** to reduce these costs and stimulate competition. This has enabled one commercial bank to launch a two-card ATM facility estimated to keep costs to three per cent, and prompted other providers to lower their charges. That, of course, means either more money going to recipients in the Pacific, or more in the pockets of Pacific New Zealanders who can choose to remit less, knowing that a greater proportion of it will find its way to recipients.

This project, carried out with the World Bank, the Reserve Bank and NZAID, also gives us a platform from which to launch some work on financial literacy early in 2009, one of our objectives under the 2007 Pacific Economic Action Plan.

Another of our objectives under that plan is to interest more Pacific people in apprenticeships. Consequently in September we launched **The Apprentice**, a Pacific component of the Modern Apprenticeship scheme, which we will roll out to Pacific communities through a series of regional workshops next year. Our objective is to raise the number of apprentices who are Pacific to six per cent of the total.

This year we have also gone online in a big way, with the launch of several websites which support Pacific culture and languages.

Pacific Starmap, launched in August, is there to help new and emerging artists to develop their careers by giving them access to information about training opportunities, business development skills and opportunities, funding sources and, above all, role models.

This in turn feeds into the economic plan's push for greater participation by Pacific peoples in the creative, emerging and growth industries.

Recognising the importance of language to retaining cultural identity we have been working with communities whose language was in most danger of disappearing. In consequence there are now three interactive **Mind Your Language** sites which allow people to learn or relearn [Cook Islands Maori](#), [Tokelauan](#) and [Niuean](#). A large number of hits on these sites suggest they are fast becoming a useful resource.

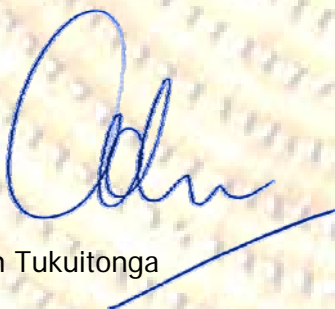
To help address some of the biggest challenges facing Pacific people we have joined forces with the large agencies with the mandate and resources. This year we finalised an accelerated **Pasifika Education Plan** with the Ministry of Education, setting targets for improved Pacific performance at all levels. We have taken a similar approach to health, with specific targets incorporated in a **Joint Health Action Plan** with the Ministry of Health, and to housing where we are developing a **Pacific Housing Strategy** with the Housing Corporation. We're also working with the Ministry of Justice on specific components of the Effective Interventions programme, and within the Family and Sexual Violence taskforces to ensure strategies and programmes which are appropriately tailored for Pacific people.

We are small players, but by using our specialist knowledge we believe we can both fine-tune our own policy advice and add value to that of other agencies. To help us do this we have also this year drafted an **Outcomes Framework** which defines our overall objectives for Pacific people in New Zealand, and provides a roadmap showing how we might get there. Developing this has been a valuable exercise as we have moved to focus on the vital few issues which will make the greatest difference.

The refocused and streamlined Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs is now quite a different agency from that which it was at the beginning of the year. Informed by feedback from stakeholders ranging from CEOs of Government agencies to Pacific communities we have taken stock and, in consequence, restructured. We aim to be a knowledge-based organisation, and to support this have built a small research capability.

While our review and restructure has meant a degree of internal focus we have also, I believe, scored some significant wins for Pacific people. We look forward to more in future years.

Best wishes for Christmas, and for a happy, prosperous and productive year in 2009.



Colin Tukuitonga

