



THE COOK ISLANDS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

APRIL 2021 | ISSUE 8



FROM THE CHAIR

A MESSAGE FROM FLETCHER MELVIN

Kia Orana

We are delighted at last be told that two-way quarantine free travel is now set from the 17th of May, subject to final approval by our Head of Ministry for TMO, and the equivalent in NZ. There has been so much hard work been achieved by so many people for this to happen, we cannot name them all, but we would like to acknowledge them and thank them. Both the Public and Private Sector have utilised expertise and resources to get everything in place. The January opening for one-way quarantine free travel has enabled all involved to test, refine, and update systems and processes, and now this second step of two-way quarantine free travel is about to be implemented. At this stage visitors will be limited to those who have been in NZ for at least 14 days.

We will all have to get use to having more people around, and let's hope we don't forget our Kia Orana spirit. Having been down to NZ like a number of people have recently, it was good to experience the normality of life there, and we have to trust that between NZ, Australia, and our Public Health Authorities in the Cook Islands, all officials are in a position of acting very quickly to any changing situation. Having our Country move to the same alert levels last week, will mean continuity of alerts across the border to NZ. Our contact tracing system is now integrated as far as Bluetooth is concerned, so everything is lining up for a safe re-opening prior to the vaccination rollout.

So, let's keep everyone safe by playing our part. Tag in, and download the app.

Kia Manuia

YOUR OFFICIAL MONTHLY ROUNDUP NEWSLETTER

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IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO FEATURE IN A CHAMBER
NEWSLETTER, PLEASE CONTACT OUR TEAM.

Kia Orana Members

March was another busy month for the Chamber as you will read in this newsletter. Our team continues to field many requests for assistance and support, and they are doing a great job and with great patience. We took the opportunity that presented itself when Mike Pero arrived on the Island to bring our May networking function forward, and based on feedback received, I think that was a great success. Now we have a date for the border opening for two-way quarantine-free travel, businesses can at last take back some control of the situation and start to plan and get ready. This will relieve a lot of stress and anxiety evident over this past fourteen months. Enjoy our newsletter, and remember, we are here to assist, so drop us an email, phone, or just pop in if we can help with anything.

Kia Manuia

PSTF AND BUSINESS SUPPPORT

The team have been very busy trying to get sole traders registered for the first time with RMD and CINSF before the 16th of April cut off date. We were pleased to support as many as we did, and hopefully, the money is now flowing through the community as a result of successful grant applications. Our next focus will be on providing some training on bookkeeping and compliance. It is important that now we have a lot more informal sector businesses registered as formal, we provide the support and guidance to ensure they are able to comply with returns and payments. We have also been working in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and BTIB to provide information and hopefully solutions for those companies that have been struck off the registry due to failure to re-register on-line by the 9th of December 2020. We had been scheduled to run a workshop on the 28th of April for interested companies, but this has now been deferred to Friday the 7th of May. The rescheduling was due to some potential developments currently being considered by some of the Judges. We are hopeful that a less costly solution can be found than going through a court process. The Chamber is currently considering whether we could provide on-going support for doing on-line returns and payments for those who need it. We would welcome feedback in this regard. MFEM have extended our funding for this important work until the end of June 2021.



PSTF BUSINESS SUPPORT, ANDREA RONGOKEA.

COOKSAFE AND COOKSAFE+

The Chamber was pleased to launch CookSafe+ on Friday the 16th of April, on time and on-budget. Having the Bluetooth capability that is interoperable with NZ is a key component of re-opening our borders safely. Downloading the app from Google Play or Apple and enabling Bluetooth takes less than a minute, the app does not drain your battery, and it is free! Please, for those of you who have not yet downloaded, please do so. This adds another layer of protection to our existing CookSafe system. We are now focusing on promotion and support of CookSafe+, along with developing the Standard Operating Procedures. CookSafe continues to be promoted and supported, and even if you have downloaded CookSafe+ we urge you to continue tagging in wherever possible. Please, report to us of any devices at shops and businesses that are not working. We are continually going around the Island doing audits and supporting and training for those that need it. We need these devices to be up and running all of the time and for tagging in just becoming a habit. There are a couple of ill-informed people making negative comments about CookSafe, and even quoting data that they have simply made up! If you want to know any facts, figures, or information, we are more than happy to

provide. Below is a recent table of stats.

Information Tables					
Week of	29th Mar - 4th April	5th - 11th April	12th - 18th April	19th - 25th April	To date
QR User Registration	177	65	200	184	9,807
Scanner Registration	3	4	1	4	774
Number of Tag In's	5,445	5,048	5,086	5,379	153,490
CookSafe+ Downloads	Not available for download		Android: 671	Android: 285	1,385
			Apple: 335	Apple: 94	

Business/Organisation Registration					
Week of	29th Mar - 4th April	5th - 11th April	12th - 18th April	19th - 25th April	To date
Te Au O Tonga	1	1	1	2	375
Puaikura	0	1	0	1	72
Takitumu	0	2	0	1	64
Aitutaki	2	0	0	0	81
Mangaia	0	0	0	0	3
Total					595



"WHILE OUR COOKSAFE CARDS HELP TRACE THE PLACES WE VISIT, THE COOKSAFE+ APP HELPS TRACE THE PEOPLE WE MEET," SAID PRIME MINISTER MARK BROWN AT THE LAUNCH OF COOKSAFE+.

For any queries, pop into the Chamber and the team will be happy to help – phone 20925 or email cooksafe@commerce.co.ck.

PACER PLUS AND TRADE

We have been assisting with a local producer of a niche product about the process of exporting and distribution. Linking with Pacific Trade & Invest and Business Link Pacific, we have learnt much about what is required. With the Pacer Plus Mechanism now in place, we will put together some documentation on 'how to' and this will be in a separate section on our website. If you need assistance, please contact us and we will do our best to assist you. We attended a zoom meeting a few days ago to talk about a Rapid Needs Assessment which is being undertaken to identify challenges and opportunities in implementing the new Pacific Agreement on Pacer+. We also talked about the need to identify ideas for closer co-operation between business and government in this area. This is being conducted by the Institute for International Trade (ITT) at the University of Adelaide, and they are keen to engage with both public and private sector stakeholders to help identify the main capacity gaps and challenges that are experienced when engaging in regional and international trade or attracting investment.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Some of us at Chamber have done a number of courses through the International Labour Organisation's International Training Campus based in Turin, Italy. They run some really interesting courses but the downside is live training is at Eastern European Time which is not great for us here in the Cook Islands. A recent initiative from them and in conjunction with PIPSO was the set up of an E-campus based in the Pacific, and have loaded a few courses on there already. Some are self-paced learning courses, and others have live webinars. While the focus is on training for Employment Membership Organisations, learnings can be easily applied to other organisations or businesses. For anyone interested, please go to <https://ecampuspacific.ilo.org>. When the Chamber website is redeveloped, we will have links to a number of on-line learning opportunities.

BRITISH COUNCIL

After an initial discussion, we have had a meeting with representatives of the Investment Climate Reform Facility (www.icr-facility.eu) This facility is funded by the European Union (EU), the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF), together with the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the British Council. The purpose of the facility is to support public and private organisations in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries in creating a more conducive, sustainable and inclusive business environment and investment climate. One of the practical uses, is they will support technical assistance in any business reform.

We would welcome input from our members about what you think our priorities should be for business reform.

TRANSPORT LICENCING ACT (1967)

The Chamber has reviewed the existing Transport Licencing Act (1967) and not surprisingly, we feel it requires a major formal review. The existing Act is strongly anti-competitive, and the language throughout is no longer appropriate and in parts no longer relevant. We would be pleased to hear any views you may have on this Act. We have approached the office of the Minister, Deputy Prime Minister Robert Tapaitau to discuss.

SOCIAL IMPACT FUND

We were pleased this week to sign a Grant Funding Agreement with the Social Impact Fund. The Social Impact Fund is a contestable grant fund administered by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The fund is designed to contribute to the achievement of the national sustainable development plan goals through national social policies developed by the Ministry.

The funds received cover support for student teams learning about enterprise via the YES programme through Tereora College (over and above the generous sponsorship from the Key Sponsor, Bank of the Cook Islands); support for micro-businesses and start-ups to access office and IT facilities, and for the increasing use of local mentors due to border restrictions. This funding agreement is for the period up to August 2023.



COOK ISLANDS INVESTMENT CORPORATION (CIIC) – DIRECTORSHIP DRIVE



CIIC are once again looking for interested people who have the experience and aptitude to serve as directors across the group of State-Owned enterprises and Crown corporate entities. Information sessions were being held this week and expressions of interest should be sent to: tairi.herrmann@cookislands.gov.ck It is important that the private sector is well represented on these Boards, so we would encourage those of you that are interested to send your expression in.

Training is provided to those that need it and CIIC would particularly encourage younger people to apply.

BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS

We made a recommendation to our Chamber Board which the Board agreed with at our meeting last week that we put the Business Excellence Awards on hold for this year, with a view to reviewing next year. It was felt that focus for the private sector should be on recovery and it was not appropriate to try and get sponsorship from businesses already under pressure.

BUSINESS LINK PACIFIC

We would like to welcome Kiesha Dais to the role of Training and Development Manager. Keisha will therefore be managing our Business Link Programme as part of that role. Kiesha is very experienced in the delivery of training and programmes, and in particular has done a lot of work in the youth space. Along with her work experience, Kiesha Chaired the Manawatu Young Chamber Board.



We have a lot of new training opportunities in the pipeline, including in Human Resource Management, Export & Importing, to name two. If you have any training requirements that you would like to see Chamber develop, please drop Kiesha an email on: training@commerce.co.ck or call her on 20925.

In May, we plan to run a survey to identify skills gaps in the private sector, so we would welcome your support in responding to this.

Remember to use the free services available to businesses such as the online Business Health Check tool, the Business Continuity Planner and the online Business Advisory Network.

CHAMBER AFTER 4PM – NETWORKING FUNCTION

The Chamber held it's second networking function on the year last week and we were lucky to secure Mike Pero as our guest speaker. Mike gave a great overview of where he is at with Pacifica Air, and the amount of work that is required to get an airline up and running is phenomenal. Mike also discussed the possibility of intra-Pacific flights which would be great, imagine the potential business possibilities that would open up if this was achieved. With about 70 attendees, Tamarind House and staff did a great job of providing nibbles and drinks too. Our next networking event will be scheduled in August.



BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

REMEMBER, IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHOWCASE YOUR BUSINESS IN OUR NEWSLETTERS, PLEASE EMAIL YOUR INTEREST TO: CHAMBER@COMMERCE.CO.CK

From Mid-March 2020 we realised it was not going to be business as usual for both The Edgewater Resort and Spa and Club Raro Resort for a long time to come. Both Resorts had blossomed through Tourism in the Cook Islands over the last few years as Papa Tom's Resorts were icons and leaders in this industry. Once the Border closed, we had several scenarios to ponder over. Closing the Resorts was quickly ruled out and never in question by the directors. We knew that the Cook Islands had been good to us for many years and believed it was our duty to stay operational as long as we could and be there for the community and the Cook Islands people.

We also had 250 staff that we had to lookout for with many not being able to return to their own homelands. Thankfully, ERP Phase one kicked in and we were able to implement strategies to ensure we could support our team and their families. The underlying theme of the Resorts was to look after each other, as we were all in this together. Thanks to all the support we had from the locals during these times we have managed to retain all our employees at The Edgewater Resort and Spa. We have maintained a focus on ensuring that we are ready for the return of the visitors by ongoing training through Cook Safe, Kia Orana Plus and Health and Safety.

Change in mindset and structural changes ensured that we were ready for the first Cohorts to arrive back home in May and June. This was a challenging eight weeks as the team had to adapt to masks, gloves and sanitizers on an hourly basis. Thankfully the TMO supported us through this time and with some intensive training we all became a team, as we worked to ensure the safety of our returning Cook Islanders plus our teams at The Edgewater Resort and Spa.

Currently Club Raro Resort is in Hibernation and the Island Hotels Ltd Board made some significant investment during these times with some major Capex projects to ensure that both Resorts will be looking great for the border opening and return of our Kiwi families. We have upgraded our Websites to ensure that our returning visitors can be assured of safety on their return with our Wellness Promise. Our promise comes straight from our heart. It



underpins the caring spirit of The Edgewater Resort & Spa and Club Raro Resort which guides our unrelenting efforts to ensure your well-being and comfort. At The Edgewater Resort and Spa we have resurfaced the Pool area for a great new outdoor feature for events and casual dining, upgraded the Marae Tai Sundeck, relocated our Coconut Kids Club Activity room which is currently being used during the school holidays for a Kid's



Activity Programme. We are also in the process of refurbishing the Manuae 300 Block as the Board continues to invest in the Cook Islands, ensuring that we use local contractors wherever possible.

Future events to look forward to are;

- A continuation of our popular Sunday BBQ held on Marae Tai each Sunday evening. A great spot to watch the sun go down and reflect on the week gone by.
- Mother's Day Lunch from just \$35.00 per person. A time to thank Mum for being there for everyone.
- Queen's Birthday weekend Island Night confirmed. To say thank you to you, the people of Rarotonga and the Cook Island's for supporting us during these uncertain times.
- Border opening Party. TBC - date keeps moving
- Our Spaghetti House Pizzeria has continued to trade throughout the COVID times with nightly specials and Pizza and Pasta Buffets.
- And watch out for Jalapeños - A taste of the South Pacific coming to Club Raro in July.



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...

Franz Stauffer continues to involve his team in coming up with ideas and initiatives to keep the wellbeing of our employees at the forefront of our thoughts. We actively engage them in activities around the Resort from Volleyball to Beach Cleans and regular Health checks especially for our team that are far from home.

Kia Toa everyone and a big Meitaki Ma'ata

Andrew

CEO Island Hotels Ltd

WEBSITE TRANSFORMATION

Our website is about to be transformed! We are pleased to say that the Board has approved funding to revamp our pretty tired-looking website. This will include web-chat, social media interface, and a secure log in for members. The secure log in will enable access to Chamber submissions, legislation policy and reviews, and international agency reports, amongst other things. We have awarded the contract to new Chamber member TN Technologies Ltd, and are confident this will be up and running within 6 weeks.



**DOWNLOAD.
INSTALL.
TAG IN.**

FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN A BRAND-NEW

**Samsung Galaxy
S20 Ultra**

CookSafe+ is here and to celebrate, we have a brand-new Samsung S20 Ultra sponsored by Vodafone Cook Islands to give away!

- 1 Download and install the free CookSafe+ app to your personal device
- 2 Send a screenshot of the app (as pictured) via Messenger to the CookSafe Facebook page
- 3 Send a picture of your CookSafe QR card/code via Messenger to the CookSafe Facebook page to Tag In

To enter the competition in person or for assistance downloading the CookSafe+ app, come in and see the CookSafe Support Team at the Chamber of Commerce.

*Terms and Conditions apply. Winner will be chosen at random and announced via the CookSafe Facebook page on Tuesday 1st June 2021. One entry per person. Entries are open to Cook Islands residents currently residing within the Cook Islands. For the full list of Terms and Conditions email cooksafe@commerce.co.ck or call +682 20925.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to our new members:

- Dive Rarotonga
- Bob Taylor
- TN Technologies Ltd



DATES OF INTEREST FOR MAY

Company Re-registration Workshop 7th May

Quarantine-free travel to/from NZ 17th May