



THE COOK ISLANDS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

FEBRUARY 2021 | ISSUE 6



FROM THE CHAIR

A MESSAGE FROM FLETCHER MELVIN

The Chamber held its first networking event for 2021, called Kia Tae Ai I Muri Ake I To Ora A – A Chamber After 4pm Members Networking Event. Despite the inclement weather, which resulted in a last-minute venue switch, around 70 people attended, and it provided a good chance to catch up and discuss the current business environment, hear what the Chamber has been up to, and listen to Lavinia Tama give us an update on projects the ADB are currently involved with in the Cook Islands. It was also great to see this event supported by government representatives and great for them to hear our updates firsthand. We intend to repeat this event quarterly.

The business environment continues to be extremely challenging and freight issues are coming to the fore. The announcement yesterday that Air NZ were bringing up the B789 cargo only this week will alleviate some of the backlog. We remain grateful for New Zealand's assistance in this regard.

The recruitment process for a permanent CEO continues and applications closed at the end of February. The recruitment sub-committee will work through the process to ensure the best available appointment is made. In the meantime, Eve is continuing to do the job, albeit voluntarily.

PHOTOS OF NETWORKING EVENT ON NEXT PAGE...

YOUR OFFICIAL MONTHLY ROUNDUP NEWSLETTER

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



FROM THE CEO

A MESSAGE FROM EVE HAYDEN

It is hard to fathom that it is March already, but we (still) remain hopeful that our borders will be able to reopen for quarantine-free travel in the next few weeks. We are certainly working hard behind the scenes to eliminate potential barriers to opening. The office remains busy, with multiple projects and programmes being delivered, and several more in the pipeline.

Kia Manuia.



NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to our new members:

- Alberto's
- Mouria
- Cinderella's Cleaning Services
- Maire Nui Gardens
- Julia Evans
- Divine Beauty
- Tower Insurance
- Higgins Independent Traders (Deli-Licious)
- Sew Raro

PRIVATE SECTOR TASKFORCE SUPPORT

The office was overwhelmed with visitors during February, primarily sole traders, who we endeavoured to get registered with RMD and CINSF, and assisted with financial records where we could. Unfortunately for many, they will not be eligible for assistance as they did not keep records of their financial activities.

We attended several meetings, along with MFEM and INTAFF, to explain what the criteria was, what records were required, and what social protection benefits may be available. Registration was required to be completed by the end of February, and applications must be completed by the end of May. We have met with the new Director of Economic Planning for MFEM, Dr Pim Borren, several times now, and he understands the role the Chamber continues to play in assisting all businesses and providing recommendations for government regarding priorities for the private sector in general.



COOKSAFE

The rollout and promotion of CookSafe continues, as do the audits. These are done to minimise issues and quickly resolve them if they do arise. We encourage you to nominate a CookSafe champion in your business so that we can focus on training them to make sure the device is powered and up and running for users to tag in. Aitutaki and now Mangaia continue to grow, and with our recent competition in Aitutaki, their tag-in numbers were over 500 last week alone. The total number of tag-ins now sits at more than 100,000 and we are averaging more than 5000 per week.

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You may have heard us mention the enhancement to CookSafe with the introduction of Bluetooth in a Cook Islands app. This will be known as CookSafe+. When downloaded, the app works by sending out a private and secure random ID code. The Bluetooth tracing function records how close the other phone was, and for how long. This will only work if the phones you come into contact with have Bluetooth tracing turned on as well. This means that if someone tests positive for COVID-19, they can send an anonymous notification containing all the random IDs their phone has sent out over the past 14 days. If your phone recognises any of these IDs, and you had been close enough for long enough to be at risk of exposure, you will receive an alert. This alert will advise you on what to do to keep you and your family safe. We are expecting to rollout and promote CookSafe+ during March. Once introduced, it will be important that you continue to use CookSafe. CookSafe+ just adds that one additional functionality of Bluetooth. The app can also be used in NZ if you are visiting there and, conversely, visitors from NZ will be able to use the NZ app here in the Cook Islands. We will be encouraging visitors from NZ to also sign up for CookSafe so that we can trace what locations they have been to and who may have been there at the same time if need be.

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



BUSINESS LINK PACIFIC – ADAPTATION GRANT

Thank you to all those who took the time to submit their applications for the Business Link Pacific Adaptation Grant. With applications closing at the end of January, the team at Business Link Pacific have been hard at work assessing the submissions over the month of February. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their submissions by the Business Link Pacific team directly. Further updates can be found on their website at businesslinkpacific.com.



While this is happening, a reminder that the free services available to businesses are still there to be utilised, such as the online Business Health Check tool, the Business Continuity Planner and the online Business Advisory Network.

For any queries on Business Link Pacific, please email training@commerce.co.ck or call Shaun on 20925.

YES PROGRAMME – KICKSTART

Wednesday the 17th of February marked the first event for the 2021 YES programme – ‘Kickstart’. This event introduced the student teams to the Chamber of Commerce and informed them all about what sort of expectations and milestones are in store for them over the year.

We would like to thank the guest speakers who came along to share their experiences and advice to help

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encourage and motivate these future leaders, as well as the professionals who volunteered their time to help the student teams develop their business ideas for the year ahead.

Well done to the students for participating wholeheartedly and sharing their ideas with the attending business professionals. By the end of the session some of the teams had settled on ideas that they would like to pursue for 2021 while others wanted to get feedback from their target markets over the next two weeks before settling on an idea. With each team being allocated a business mentor already, 2021 is shaping up to be an exciting year for the YES programme. This year’s mentors are Gaye Whitta, Phil Henderson, David Street and Mareko Boyd.



CO-SHARED WORKING SPACE

Don’t forget to spread the word about our co-shared working space. We also have two laptops available for use – just bring your own USB sticks and data, as we have a hotspot available. Please ring the Chamber on 20925 to make a booking or email chamber@commerce.co.ck.

MINIMUM WAGE REVIEW

The 2021-2022 Minimum Wage Review has now been completed. The Chamber conducted a survey to ascertain the appetite for any change from the private sector. We received 103 responses, and while the majority of respondents were currently paying their employees above the minimum wage, many mentioned that any rise would have to see a corresponding rise in the wage subsidy.

There were also concerns about the effect on the government’s payroll and its affordability, and that it was simply not the right time to consider a rise. The panel conducted public consultation meetings, radio talkback and meetings with the panel members, who consisted of MFEM, Community, Workers, and Chamber for the Employers. Our recommendation was that there should be no change at this time and that we should review again in 2022.

LONG-TERM VISITOR STAY PROJECT

We have had no progress with this project, and it seems there is little appetite from either our government or New Zealand’s to consider anything ahead of two-way quarantine-free travel (QFT). This is disappointing as it would have given us the opportunity of some economic activity in the interim. Unfortunately, border controls are inflexible at this time. We will continue to work on this so we can hit the ground running when two-way QFT is achieved.

The recent survey for Long-Term Visitor Stays was designed to see what appetite there was for longer-term stays and 90% of the 51 responses received indicated that they were interested in providing longer-term stay accommodation – which definitely demonstrates some keen interest from a significant number of accommodation providers.

NATIONAL LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD (NLAB)

We attended the first meeting of the NLAB last week. The Employer's Representatives this year are myself, Fletcher Melvin, and Eileen Turepu. This Board is made up of representatives from the CI Workers Association (CIWA), Internal Affairs, MFEM, MFAI, and the Public Service Commission. Matters discussed included:

- Chamber proposed that a representative for migrant workers be appointed and this is being considered.
- Workplace Health and Safety – bill is still delayed with Crown Law.
- Social Protection Agenda – funds have been received from International Labour Organisation (ILO) to support Employment Services and to fund Employment Mediation Services as a pilot programme. The Cook Islands will be ratifying Convention C102, which is the Social Security Convention.
- Minimum Wage Review.
- Labour force movement to New Zealand being a concern.
- Issues and costs around migrant worker portability. Board recommended that a collective statement be made and some solutions suggested.
- Chamber programme supported by ILO to provide training and support to micro-enterprises to assist in formalising their businesses (subject to ILO funding).
- Chamber programme Ready2Work to provide some skills and training for those finding difficulty in getting employment (subject to funding).

CINDERELLA'S CLEANING SERVICES

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT



My name is Pamela Williams and I am the Sole Proprietor of Cinderella's Cleaning Services (CCS) which specializes in a wide-range of regular and one-off cleaning services to suit your needs. These services are a must have for people on the go, or for those whom just want to get on top of things. CCS also offer property management services whether you are a property owner or a tenant and provide other services you may find useful and accommodating.

Established in August 2019, CCS offers a consistent and efficient service to help maintain a high-quality standard at all times. I pledge absolute satisfaction at the same time deliver outstanding results.

Using some of the best products and 'Karcher' equipment for my cleaning services, CCS will leave your home and property looking and feeling fresh and hygienically cleaned.

Below shows a wide-range of cleaning services that CCS provides...

- General domestic cleaning (standard cleaning)
- Deep/one-off cleaning
- Pre/post tenancy cleaning
- Pre house selling and rental cleaning
- Holiday homes/rental properties/staycations and accommodation cleaning
- Office cleaning
- On-site standard car cleaning
- Window cleaning
- Water-blasting services
- Upholstery/rug cleaning
- Packing/organizing/re-arranging
- Online selling
- Party help



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DATES OF INTEREST

Utilities Regulation Policy 2021 submissions close 10th of March 2021