

GENDER AND  
DEVELOPMENT DIVISION,  
INTERNAL AFFAIRS

CINCW BIENNIAL  
CONFERENCE  
HIGHLIGHTS:

- Mock Parliament
- Vaine Tini from Pa Enuā
- Women in Business
- Family Health and Safety Survey
- Cook Islands Gender Profile report

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# Te Toka Ti'ava o te Basileia

MARCH 4-8, 2015

## NCW Conference & Biennial



Colour, ei and crafts filled the Avarua Assembly of God Church on Monday, March 4 for the 9th Cook Islands National Council of Women Biennial and Conference on Rarotonga. The Biennial meeting brought together member organisations including those from the Pa Enuā, to experience first hand activities throughout the week including a

mock Parliament session, presentations about the Family Health and Safety Survey, gender issues and women's empowerment, and the launch of the Cook Islands Gender Profile report. International and regional participants included Kim Robertson from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and Dr Laurant Zessler of



the United Nations Population Fund, while the conference was funded through Australian Aid's Gender Project along with the Cook Islands government.

## Vaine Tini take over Parliament

Women's empowerment and ending domestic violence was hotly debated in a mock parliament session at the House of Parliament in Nikao, Rarotonga. The Cook Islands National Council of Women with the help of the Cook Islands Parliament, the United Nations Population Fund and Secretariat of the



Members of the Cook Islands National Council of Women experience processes of Parliament.



Pacific Community were able to utilise the House to re-enact a Parliamentary sitting for a day. The aim: to expose women leaders to the feel and work of being an MP. The main activity involved a mock tabling of the Family Law Bill, a recently drafted piece of legislation that deals with domestic violence.

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# Mock session focus on DV



Seasoned politician Ngamau Munokoa, (Aunty Mau), puts forward her argument on the Family Law Bill during the mock sitting.

*“Even if it is not for you, help women in your community who want to follow this path.”*

UNFPA representative, Dr Laurant Zessler explains the processes taken to collect data on such a sensitive subject



Differing views on dealing with domestic violence were revealed in the mock Parliament session on the second day of the conference. Overwhelming support for passing the Family Law Bill was felt through the first half of the sitting, although more opposition came through in the second. The protection the FLB can give to a victim of domestic abuse was generally agreed on, however the possible financial difficulty the victim and her

family might find themselves in was hit home. A recurring point was what happens to the victim after the perpetrator, usually her partner and main breadwinner for the family, has been sent to prison? Many participants also argued what rights the perpetrator had. The issue of motoro or tomo ‘are was also raised, and how that kind of behavior that threatens a girl’s freedom and safety should not be laughed off or ignored.

How the FLB can deal with these points created passionate discussion among participants well after the session ended. The Family Health and Safety Survey was also brought into discussion, bringing a solid factual foundation to why the FLB is important.



## Speaker: “Experience opens door for women”

Current Speaker of the House, Niki Rattle, expressed her gratitude to the Vaine Tini for inviting her to be Speaker for the mock Parliament session. “This has never been done before,” said Rattle, “It has been a wonderful experience to have the House full of our women.”



Cook Islands Speaker of the House, Niki Rattle.

With most of the women participating having a focus on business and craft, the session was an opportunity to test whether politics is a path

some may want to follow. “It is no longer something to be imagined. Even if you think it is not for you, help women in your community who may want to follow this path,” said Rattle. “It is not about akateitei, it is important to take action.”

The mock session involved Parliamentary processes, including making a motion, points of order, speaking times and becoming a committee of the whole.

## More education means less violence

Day three of the Conference saw presentations made by representatives from the United Nations Population Fund, Secretariat of the Pacific

Community, Cook Islands Statistics Office and a young Cook Islands woman in business. UNFPA representative Dr Laurant Zessler gave a

presentation on the Family Health and Safety Survey, highlighting the facts that arose from the Cook Islands’ study and some from around the world that relate to domestic violence. “More education is associated with less violence, this is a fact worldwide,” said Zessler.

He explained the processes taken to collect data on such a sensitive subject as domes-

tic violence, while CINCW president Vaine Wichman explained the care they took in presenting the data so that interviewees were not identified. In addition, SPC representative Kim Robertson explained gender statistics to the audience, saying that gender statistics reflect the issues of gender roles and concerns men and women have in relation to these roles.

# In Their Own Voice

## Profiles from the Pa Enuu



### Mehau Johnson

**Island:**

Manihiki

**Occupation:**

Businesswoman and pearl technician

I felt a surge of empowerment from the experience of standing in the House of Parliament. It was a thrill to support the Family Law Bill and express my opinion on such a sensitive but important subject. I have a new found

appreciation for the country's leaders and what they have to do in Parliament.

It has planted the seed for me, my long-term goal may be to become Speaker!

I do see the change in gender roles; my husband takes care of our children while I am working, studying or away to attend this conference.

I am in awe of the women in NCW, who are so skilled in craft, to see them stand in Parliament.



**Mehau gave a speech at the conference about being a business owner in the Pa Enuu, and its gains and hardships.**

**“Empower women spiritually first; then physically — in our talents and physical capabilities; then mentally — through training, education and pursuing a career.”**

I will never stop sharing what I have experienced this week, especially our day in Parliament. I felt so important, I never thought I would get the chance to sit in Teina Bishop's seat! Now I know first hand what those MPs do, not just hearing it on the radio. I will take this experience back to Aitutaki and share it with everyone.

### Tapita William-Teiotu

**Island:**

Aitutaki

**Occupation:**

Manager at Aitutaki Women's Development Craft Shop  
Assistant Secretary for CINCW Aitutaki



**“I never thought I would get the chance to sit in our MP Teina Bishop's seat.”**



### Putai Kairae

**Island:**

Mauke

**Occupation:**

Assitant to Mauke Gender Development Officer

I am very inspired by what we have experienced this week. The mock Parliament gave me the encouragement to stand to be on the Island Council. Usually I am the one nominating others, other men; it is my turn now! My thoughts are to take back this experience and teach target groups such as school kids and youth groups.



### Annie Ruatoo

**Island:**

Mangaia

**Occupation:**

Teacher Aid  
Secretary for the Mangaia Women's Council

This is my third conference and it is the best one I have been to. For us to get a taste of what processes they go through in Parliament has been a lifetime opportunity. It was good to get to debate the Family Law

Bill. For us in the outer islands we have people come over to teach us about it then leave and nothing happens, we have been asking when is something going to be done?

### Matangaro Takai

**Island:**

Rakahanga

**Occupation:**

President for CINCW Rakahanga

The whole experience was awesome, I really enjoyed the mock Parliament. Now I know what it means to sit in parliament and that it is not an easy job. When I return to Rakahanga, I will call a meeting and pass on this knowledge,



especially to our young women. We have to let our youngsters shine!

Photos: Tupopongi Marsters  
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### The new National Council of Women executive 2015-2017.

Clockwise from left:  
Deputy Secretary for the Northern Group Mereani Tangata, Assistant Secretary Nga Manea, Assistant Treasurer Theresa Purea, Vice President Henrika Wilson-Marona, Patron Rongomatane Ada Ariki, President Vaine Wichman, Secretary Maria Browne and Treasurer Tapu Enjoy.

### With many thanks to:

1. Australian Aid—Gender Project
2. Ministry of Internal Affairs, Government of the Cook Islands
3. Cook Islands National Council of Women

# CI Gender Profile report launched

International Women's Day was celebrated worldwide on Sunday, March 8, and there was no more appropriate day to launch the Cook Islands Gender Profile report. In conjunction with the closing of the CINCW Conference and Biennial meeting, the report was launched by Minister for Internal Affairs Nandi Glassie, who thanked all those involved in its creation.

The report brings together statistical data, research, reports and indicators from the Cook Islands and analyses these in terms of social and economic differences between Cook Islands men and women. It looks at ten important issues such as population, work and employment, housing, education and environment.

The report is a joint collaboration between Cook Islands Government ministries, CINCW and regional partners Secretariat of the Pacific Community.



**Minister of Internal Affairs Nandi Glassie launched the Cook Islands Gender Profile at the closing of the 9th NCINCW conference on Sunday, March 8.**



**SPC Gender Statistics Advisor Kim Robertson presented the Gender Profile report at the closing ceremony, outlining the ten important topics the report explores, such as violence against women, education, work and employment, and housing.**