

April 1995

TRIP TO RAROTONGA, COOK ISLANDS

22–29 March 1995

Philipp Muller
Director

1. **Objectives:**

- i. to undertake the Cook Island country visit with briefing to Senior Officials and Government Ministers.
- ii. to participate and bring to a conclusion the 3rd Coastal Protection meeting.
- iii. to have discussions of issues that may arise at the Annual Session and to have preliminary discussions on Cook Islands hosting the 1996 Session.
- iv. to make contact and exchange information with individuals.

2. Good exposure with Ministers and Senior Officials was achieved both informally and at official meetings. The Ministers of Works and Marine Resources opened and closed the Workshop respectively.

A copy of the South Pacific Seafloor Atlas was presented to both Ministers at the official function and a few interviews relating to the Workshop and other SOPAC Work Program activities were given to the media.

The Prime Minister was not available so no contact was made with him. He attended a public function that night.

3. **Work Program for Cook Islands**

Discussions with many officials and the Minister confirmed the priority is for work in support of black pearl production. Limited circulation within the Manahiki Lagoon was given as the reason for the relatively slow growth rates. I am not sure how greater knowledge of the circulation in the lagoon could lead to improvements. However pearl farmers may be able to manage their farms with improved understanding. The blasting of a channel is unlikely to increase the circulation significantly. Future work will be on Penrhyn where government research has started. Details of the needs will be provided by Don Forbes.

4. The question of the Cook Islands helping to justify Offshore Programs were broached but there was some hesitancy whether the Prime Minister would be prepared to endorse it at either the Forum or Post Forum Dialogue. Support in relation to the Japan/SOPAC Deepsea programs would be forthcoming but I would recommend more prompting from SOPAC.

5. I had discussed Stuart Kingan's technical paper on the Mn Nodules and it was agreed that the best approach would be for Stuart to be an extra week at SOPAC at the Annual Session to complete the report.

6. The Minister felt that the Annual Session should be hosted in Cook Islands next

year although he was briefed on alternatives and likely direct costs to Cook Islands. He included his offer in the closing statement to the Workshop,

There could be some back lash to SOPAC on the Workshop's rejection of the claims on the success of the CPU at the Rarotonga Hotel.

7. Cook Islands Secretary of Marine Resources was briefed on the funding situation and Secretariat proposal to meet any shortfall. He and Tony Utanga were briefed on the institutional review of Marine Resource Sector and the likely outcomes. They opposed any merge with the Forum Secretariat but could entertain it with FFA representing the remaining Fisheries Agency.

8. Discussions were held with Filipino Taulina on the Tuvalu Pilot Project and what is to become of the Airlift Suction Dredge and Equipment. We also discussed the presentation of the report. This should be finalised at discussions in Suva.

9. Tony Utanga retires in May and there is a move to retire Stuart Kingan also. This latter information is restricted. There should be a scramble to find a solution.