

Parliament of Kiribati
Travel Report
Mr Wall, Ms Lawder, Ms Rafferty

24 – 28 August 2014



SUNDAY 24 AUGUST 2014

11.00 am **Arrival, transfer Utirerei Hotel, Ambo**

Drive around familiarisation – Betio

MONDAY 25 AUGUST 2014

8.30am **Courtesy call to the Hon Speaker Taomati IUTA, Speaker's Office, Parliament building, Ambo (Clerk and Deputy Clerk in attendance)**

Discussion included references to the program for the sitting day, Public Accounts Committee procedures and training (including not giving Members "ideas"), the high cost of broadcasting (\$23/minute) and violence in the community.

4/47 members women, 3 Ministers.

Discussion on the proceedings of the previous Friday relating to allegations against the Minister for Women and possible defamation action, especially in relation to the removal of parliamentary privilege.

10.00am **Parliament meeting starts. Observe Kiribati Parliamentary proceedings, Chamber, Parliament building, Ambo**

In I-Kiribati language. Question time – 1st question written on notice, 3 supplementaries.

Acoustics in the chamber difficult with some members using headphones. No cameras.

11.30am **Meeting with the Australian High Commissioner, Bairiki**
Lunch with Australian High Commissioner, Bairiki

George Fraser, High Commissioner

Discussed Australia's role in the islands relating to aid for social, economic, health, infrastructure and education issues.

2.00pm

Visit and meet with DFAT/AusAid programme staff, Bairiki

Michael Hunt, Deputy High Commissioner and Counsellor Development

Mr Hunt gave a briefing on the profile on Australia's support in the region. In particular statistics on employment (20% of population employed the rest subsistence living on fish and vegetables), education and health spends. Some of the issues raised were:

Environment and sustainability

Domestic violence (Family Peace Act)

Poverty, hopelessness and alcoholism

Non-communicable diseases, diabetes

Child mortality, respiratory illness

Pension at 67, \$40/week – average healthy life expectancy is 58 so achieving pension age is unlikely.

See attached report of joint health mission



3.15pm

Meeting with Director of Tourism Ms Reeti Onorio, Tourism office, Betio

Interesting discussion on the potential areas for marketing of game fishing, surfing in Kiritimati, WWII enthusiasts and birdwatching.

Issues are funding, lack of suitable infrastructure for tourists.

Main promotional tool is the internet.

See attached document

3.45pm

Site visit at Betio Prison - Mr Peter Bwebweata - Ag. Officer Commanding, Betio

There are three male prisons, 1 female (currently not open)

Currently the prisons are overcrowded – those found guilty of murder are sentenced for life. Usual offences are murder, alcohol, rape and violence.

37 prison officers are employed.

We visited the male prison on Betio and the conditions were very basic – cramped sleeping quarters were on two levels - one on the ground, one a raised platform. No ventilation, no proper bathroom facilities, food provided with prisoners having to cook it themselves.

6.30pm **Invitation to State function to welcome the British High Commissioner, Mr Roderick Drummond and Ms Osnat Lubrani from UNRC. (Cultural dancing and speeches).**

TUESDAY 26 AUGUST 2014

9.30am **Site visit at Marine Training Centre, Betio**

Site tour and discussion with the Acting Captain. Discussed the recent expansion of the MTC with New Zealand and Australian funding along with accreditation to teach at captain level. Curriculum covers wide range of shipboard activities such as hospitality/.catering right through to navigation (also (good coffee).

12.30pm **Lunch with Minister of Women and Social Affairs, Hon. Mrs Tangariki Reete**

Discussed issues relating to increasing the participation of women in the parliament and the recent events in regard to comments made in the chamber about the Minister. Cultural barriers to women's participation in political life. She also mentioned the need for Members to have proper offices in the parliament and in their electorates (use their own homes in electorates).

1.30pm **Visit "Tetoamatoa" (Disability) site, Nanikai Village**

See attached program.

4.00pm **Afternoon tea with local MPs**

WEDNESDAY 27 AUGUST 2014

9.00am **Meeting with Director of Agriculture, Parliament building, Ambo**

See attached strategic plan

Issues raised included:

Bio-security of imports – threats include taro beetle mealey bug, scale, fruit fly and Hawaiian yellow ant

Soil health: the northern islands have more potential due to greater rainfall (bananas and root crops)

Rice imported from Thailand and Australia

Desexing of dogs (fly in team of vets)

Pigs - trying to discourage from town, all feed imported, slaughtering done "at home"

Duck population wiped out due to bird flu.

11.00am Meeting with General Manager Mr Toma Tohumu of the Kiribati Housing Cooperation, Betio

Housing provided for civil servants – from \$50 per month subsidised by government.

Quality of housing stock low standard and rapid wear and tear due to climate and building materials used.

Currently looking at a mortgage system on new properties and have a proposal to build up to 300 new residences using a new construction system of concrete molded panels. Expect that each dwelling will cost between \$15-20, 000 to construct. Mainly to house key workers such as police, medical staff and teachers and placed close to workplaces.



12.30pm Lunch with Chairman and members of Climate Change Committee

UNDP funding ceased but have Parliament funding up to August 2015. The Committee did a lot of travel to the outer islands holding public hearings. They report to the Parliament at every meeting.

We agreed to supply a copy of the ACT Government Climate Change Strategy to the Committee Secretary.

4.00pm Meeting with Speaker

Summary of visit, giving of gifts, thank yous.

4.30pm Meeting with Team from of Medical Health, Medical Services, Parliament building Ambo

Discussed:

Malnutrition rate, child mortality rate (due to lack of food and lack of variety), gestational diabetes, breastfeeding rate 60-70%

Increasing levels of teenage pregnancy (some difficulty with a predominantly Catholic population (75%))

HOPE – health outreach program for equity and Healthy Families program

75% tax on cigarettes

Main causes of death – diabetes, tuberculosis, rheumatic heart disease, smoking and alcoholism
95% immunisation rate.

THURSDAY 28 AUGUST 2014

8:30am Visit to Agricultural farm near airport. Cultivation of native plants, vegetables, and raising pigs and chickens.

12 noon Departure



Discussion summary – Speaker, Clerk and Deputy Clerk

- Copy of Speaker's rulings to Deputy Clerk
- Training for Parliamentary Counsel (position recently vacant)
- Electorate offices for Members
- Register of Members Interests to Deputy Clerk
- Gifts Policy to Deputy Clerk
- Issue with following up recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee – they do not seem to have a system to keep track of things (possible rethink of their notice paper?)
- Librarian - there seems to be no improvement in the services provided – claims to be waiting on shelving ?
- Also issues of security with library material going missing.