

## Titema 2018



### TE IPUKAREA SOCIETY

*Caring for our Environment  
Taporoporo i to tatou Ao Rangi*

**Aroa Kiritimiti e Kia mataora i te Mataiti Ou!**

**Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all,  
our readers, supporters and partners.**

**We are happy to have your continued support in  
2019 and stay tuned as we have a number of  
projects planned for this year.**

### Seabed Mining Moves Forward

The Draft Copy of the Amended Seabed Minerals Bill is out now for comment. We encourage the public to read the bill and provide their thoughts on the proposed Bill as well as any general concerns they have around Seabed Mining in the Cook Islands. Comments are due on the 7th February.

A government team is currently touring the country to consult locals on the bill, which will enable and manage seabed mining activities in our waters. If passed, the bill would replace the Minerals Act 2009.

That doesn't leave much time, so make sure you get on to having your say now! We are happy to provide advice in providing your feedback to Government.

### The Battle Against Plastic Continues

Single use plastics are one of major contributors to the waste we generate in the Cook Islands. And now that many of the retailers are helping reduce the use of plastic shopping bags by charging for them, plastic drink bottles are the biggest contributor to our plastic waste. It is estimated that over 3 million plastic bottles are imported into the country every year, with none of them being sent back out of the country.



*A selection of the available colours of our reusable, thermal drink bottles.*

Te IpuKarea Society has been working on alternatives to single use plastics now for several years. We have made significant headway in promoting biodegradable take away food containers to replace the polystyrene that was commonly used. We have also promoted the use of biodegradable straws for drinks, and now a number of bars and cafes no longer supply plastic straws. Last year launched a Plastic Battle Campaign to raise more awareness about the plastic issue, and also to suggest some more alternatives to the use of single use plastics. The latest initiative in this

campaign is to promote the use of reusable water bottles, based around the **Mana Tiaki, Protect a Little Paradise** theme.

These bottles are available in 2 sizes 800ml and 500ml, and in 5 vibrant colours, red, blue, gold, silver and black. They have an attractive locally designed Cook Islands themed logo on them as well. The bottles are insulated, and can keep beverages hot or cold for up to 12 hours. They can be used for water, coffee, beer, or any other beverage that you like to keep hot or cold.

We are hoping that everyone will get on board, by purchasing these attractive bottles. They are perfect for local sports teams and sporting events, and school students. Tourist accommodators could provide them in their rooms for tourists to use, and take home with them when they leave our shores as a memento of their stay. They can actually save you money, as you can refill them at any of the water filling stations around the island marked safe for drinking. You can also refill them at your local beer filling station if that is your preference! Or perhaps even ask your café to use it for your coffee to keep it hot and safe from spilling in your car.

The larger 800ml bottles are \$25 each, and the smaller ones \$20, if purchased direct from the Te Ipukarea Society office, on the town side of Bamboo Jacks, just before Rarotonga Printing. All funds made from the sale of these bottles will be used to support our work in caring for the Cook Islands environment in one of the 5 focal areas of the Society: waste management, biodiversity, ecologically sustainable development, youth, and climate change.

If you are in an industry that generates or uses a lot of single use plastic water bottles, please come and talk to us in our office about joining with us on our plastic bottle initiative. Or email us at [info@tiscookislands.org](mailto:info@tiscookislands.org) or phone 21144.

## Meet Our New Intern

Tangike, tangike, tangike rava

My name is Jessie Tepora Nicholson. I am a descendent of the Pirangi and Apaina blood lines from Arorangi and Ivirua, Mangaia, respectively, through my mama and papa. In 2009, my family and I lifted our lives in Auckland, New Zealand and settled in Arorangi. Growing up in Rarotonga, I learnt that environmental problems around the world were affecting our little country and so, saw the importance of protecting our rich biodiversity to safeguard our future. That, along with a passion for science, brought about by excellent science teachers in high school – Lenati Ramokosoi, Delaney Yaqona and Jackson Martin – and very supportive parents, led me to where I stand today.



*Our new intern Jess was put straight into promoting our new water bottles!*

I am currently in my final year of a Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in Ecology and Biodiversity and minoring in Environmental Science at the University of Waikato (UoW) in

Hamilton, New Zealand. From a young age, I was interested in zoology, but it was through the strong impressions brought out by Lagoon Day and through moving to Rarotonga that I also became interested in the marine environment and its importance in our ecosystem. It was whilst attending Papaaroa Seventh Day Adventist School that I became passionate about science and at Nukutere College I learnt that I was particularly interested in biology, which I continued to pursue at Tereora College for the remainder of my senior student years.

As a year 13 student in 2016, after much deliberation, I decided to pursue my interest of biology at university. Since then, I have gained a wider understanding of botany, ecology, sustainable management, resource management, cellular and molecular biology, earth sciences, evolution, zoology and oceanography over the past two years that I have studied at UoW. What I enjoy most at university would be my laboratory classes but field trips around the Waikato region and throughout the North Island are great fun and educative too. I may attend up to four different labs a week, and each could be up to three hours long. Though draining, they're essential to learning the practical skills and knowledge that we learn theoretically during lectures. I've made a cleaning spray out of orange peels using lab equipment, tested water quality in lakes, identified dozens of minerals and rocks such as obsidian (volcanic glass), pyrite (fool's gold) and quartz, used a microscope to examine leaf tissue and small invertebrates, dissected a cow's eye and a sheep's lung, and experimented with food colouring and water to observe the effects of different impacts, such as temperature and wind, on the water column, to name a few. It was during this time that I also learnt of "kaitiakitanga" – a New Zealand Māori concept which calls us to be stewards of the land and water, to be its caretakers, its voice and to acknowledge that all living things have mana. There are so many opportunities and career pathways in the world of science, there is still so much to be discovered and yet so much to be managed and protected from

environmental issues that affect our nation and our world at present.

After completing my first year at university in 2017, I started an internship with the Ministry of Marine Resources over the university summer break. This provided invaluable work experience as I was supervised by brilliant marine scientists who allowed me to experience working in both marine and terrestrial environments around Rarotonga. I recommend the internship for anyone interested in marine science. In 2018, I completed my second year of university and returned home to seek out another internship opportunity to further broaden my experience working in various scientific fields. Te Ipukarea Society (TIS) were able to provide that opportunity and have offered an internship until I depart for university to complete my final year. Working with TIS provides a perfect opportunity for me to put "kaitiakitanga" into practice through the Mana Tiaki - Protect a Little Paradise programme they are implementing.

I look forward to the experiences that I will gain from working here at TIS as this will allow me to be better equipped when I return to the island to work after graduation. In the future, I hope to work to make a difference in our scientific communities all over the Cook Islands so that I can contribute to the protection, preservation and management of our natural resources within our marine and terrestrial environments. Until then, let's all do our part to help clean and protect our little paradise.

### GEF Waste Management Workshop

On 17-18 of December TIS staff Alanna, Kelvin and Liam attend the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP) Waste Management dialogue meeting. At the meeting Alanna was able to present on past TIS waste management projects which have utilised the GEF SGP funding. The team engaged in breakout sessions and participated in group presentations where they assisted in brainstorming potential projects to be



applied for under GEF SGP. Two projects, one focussing on behavioural change to improve waste management in the Pa Enua, and the second project focussing on the promotion and production of reusable children's and adult nappies with the intent of reducing single-use non-biodegradable nappies in the Cook Islands.



Above: Alanna presents on our past waste management initiatives funded under the GEF SGP. Below: Liam and Pasha Curruthers present their group's ideas.



The Advance Disposal Fee (a one-off cost added to all imported goods which result in an eventual waste product, to cover the cost of removal from the waste stream) was a hot topic at the workshop, with many government and non-government attendees acknowledging this is will be the only way to create significant reductions and management of the huge amount of non-biodegradable rubbish being produced on our islands.



Donna Smith's amazing idea to create locally made reusable baby and adult nappies was widely supported.

## Ways to cut down on waste this Christmas, and beyond!

Story provided to Cook Islands News in December 2018

Christmas is usually a time for giving and celebrating. The 1 month period from early December to early January has many more parties than any other period in the year. As a result, we are creating a lot more rubbish which ends up going into our land. Te Ipukarea Society has a few tips to help you reduce the size of your rubbish footprint this festive season.

An excellent way to reduce the number of empty bottles and cans you produce is to get a keg of beer from the local brewery. Both the Rarotonga Brewery in Panama and the Matutu brewery in Muri do 50 litre kegs for \$300. That works out at about \$2.00 per stubby. Matutu also has a 20 litre keg for \$150. Included in the price, the breweries deliver the keg, and sets it up to deliver ice cold beer on tap. Matutu also recycle 330ml Steinlager and Heineken stubby bottles, which they sterilize and refill for their bottled beer. You can also take your own bottles or flagons to either brewery for a refill. Well over 1 million bottles have been kept out of the landfill in the past 2 years because of the breweries.

Another thing we can do is use washable plates, glasses, and cutlery for the kaikai that

accompanies our celebrations. Or if you want to cut down on the washing up, use biodegradable rourou or plates, and no plastic or polystyrene. The huge Karika Ariki investiture held recently was an excellent example of using traditional raurau for food. No disposable cutlery was needed as all the food could easily be eaten with the hands!



*Just some of the raurau (coconut leaf plates) offered to guests at the recent investiture of the new Karika Ariki.*

When looking for Christmas presents this year, avoid cheap plastic toys that will only keep children interested for a few days before ending up in the rubbish. Look for high quality presents that last. Books are an excellent present for you child, as they will help them learn, and also if they do end up in the rubbish at some stage, they are biodegradable! Packs of playing cards are also an ideal biodegradable present that can keep children (and adults) amused for hours. Also avoid plastic gift wrapping, and use biodegradable paper, or reuse newspaper! The wrapping can then be placed in your compost bin! What??? You don't have a compost bin! Give Te Ipukarea Society a call on 21144 or email us on [info@tiscookislands.org](mailto:info@tiscookislands.org), as we may be able to help you out!

### **Making a Difference Through TIS**

Have you ever thought about creating or running your own environmental project? Do you know something that needs fixing in our little paradise?

For example, do you want to make a difference in the way we manage our waste or conserve our local marine or terrestrial environment? If that sounds like you, then Te Ipukarea Society may be able to help you kick start your idea.

Te Ipukarea Society have been a proactive Non-government environmental organisation for 22 years here in the Cook Islands. We are the only Cook Islands members of BirdLife International and the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Over the years the society, through its members and staff, have assisted many local conservation projects. These include, for example assisting the Takitumu Conservation Area, the eradication of rats on Suvarrow, and bird surveys on Suvarrow, Takutea, Penryhn, Manihiki, Rarotonga, Mangaia and Atiu. We are also very active in the waste management area, working particularly with local schools on composting and worm farming. We have a successful track record of designing and implementing projects that make significant positive impact on our environment.

Starting from humble beginnings of just a few dedicated and hardworking volunteers back in 1996, the society has grown and now has 4 staff members. Having dedicated paid staff has helped us to develop our local, regional and international networks in order to assist us in protecting our fragile island ecosystems. These networks include individual philanthropists, scientists, regional and international organisations, as well as Cook Islands Government agencies and private sector. These partnerships and contacts allows us to draw on expertise from many fields, and also keeps us abreast of potential funding opportunities.

Te Ipukarea Society would be happy to hear from budding conservationists who think we may be able to assist them bring their project ideas to life. If an idea is likely to have a positive impact on our environment, and is feasible, the Society can help develop a plan based on your idea as well as look for the necessary funds required to start your project.

We have five focal areas we work with. These are biodiversity, waste management, youth, climate change, and eco-sustainable development. Project ideas should be linked to one of those areas. Under these areas we work with schools, the tourism industry, practitioners in marine and land wildlife conservation, government departments such as Climate Change and the Environment Service, and private sector such as CITC and Cook Islands General Transport.

Successful conservation project outcomes are achieved through partnerships between likeminded individuals who share the same vision. Past project ideas which community members have requested TIS assistance in have included the rent a plate scheme that is being run by Te Uki Ou Primary at the popular Muri Night Market, and recycling at the popular Vaka Eiva outrigger canoe festival.

In the words of a great man, Mahatma Gandhi, you may never know what results will come of your actions, but if you do nothing, there will be no results. So if you have an idea based around protecting or conserving our environment that you want to act on, whether it be in Rarotonga or in the outer islands, reach out to Te Ipukarea Society today to see if we can help make your vision become a reality. You can email us on [info@tiscookislands.org](mailto:info@tiscookislands.org), or phone on 21144. Or just drop in for a chat at our office in town, between Bamboo Jacks and Rarotonga Printing. You can also visit our website at [tiscookislands.org](http://tiscookislands.org) for more information about what we do.

***Meitaki ma'ata for reading our newsletter this month***

***Stay tuned for our next newsletter***

***And don't forget to buy a reusable Mana Tiaki bottle from our office!***

***Ka kite,***

**- The TIS Team**

