

TALANOA TOKTOK

Official Publication of the Pacific Conference of Churches



Leaders unite Pastor Billy Wetewea of Kanaky, Reverend Dr Semisi Turagavou of the Methodist Church in Fiji, Rev Dr Bruce Yeats of the Presbyterian Church of Fiji and Reverend Fr Sowane Fotutata of the Episcopal Conference of the Pacific

We want justice

Church leaders support diaspora

PACIFIC workers who seek work in Australia under a regional labour scheme need to be better prepared before leaving their home countries. Talks between church leaders and workers in the Pacific Labour Mobility Scheme in Australia highlighted this need.

Leaders of the Fiji and Tongan Methodist churches and the Solomon Islands United Church visited workers in Adelaide and spoke to local advocacy groups.

"Our people have asked for pastoral care overseas and support for families which are left behind," said Reverend Dr Semisi Turagavou of

the Methodist Church in Fiji.

"We also heard requests for workers to be counselled and trained along with their families prior to departure."

Diaspora groups told the Pacific Church Leaders Meeting that workers were often unaware or unclear of working conditions and how to raise grievances with employers.

The discussions were made possible through the support of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

More than 20 Pacific church leaders attended the four-day event.

Safe church takes shape in RMI



Island time the PCC's Adi Mariana Waqa with children in the Republic of the Marshall Islands

IN November, churches were being made safer in the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Church workers were trained to implement safeguarding policies to protect children and ensure safe reporting lines in cases of abuse. The RMI, Fiji and Solomon Islands have been the focus of an initiative between the Pacific Conference of Churches, UNICEF and local church groups.

Training manuals have been designed in consultation with partner churches and staff have been trained to use the material. PCC Facilitator, Adi Mariana Waqa, spent most of November in RMI to train and certify church workers.

It's Island Time

Solar panels give community hope

ON the remote Fijian island of Vatulele, a recent cyclone destroyed the village boat - source of transportation for people and freight.

Solar panels were ripped off roofs, leaving villagers without power to freeze fish or lights for children to study at night. The Presbyterian Church of the USA and the Pacific Conference of

Churches to replace the panels and provide village youth with a solar-powered freezer.

This means the young people will be able to catch fish and store them in the freezer for future sale.

They village was also gifted with a 40-horsepower outboard motor to power the new community boat which will be a fishing

platform and emergency transport for the community.

The gifts were transported aboard the voyaging canoe, Uto Ni Yalo and accompanied by PCC staff and ministers of the Anglican and Methodist churches.

A two-day course on climate change and rethinking economic and ecological models was held.



Light work ... Sam Ulucake (right) of the Uto Ni Yalo and Wilfer Rigamoto from PCC set up solar lights on Vatulele



Our heroes Marshall Islands poet, Kathy Jentnil-Kijiner; Bougainville parliamentarian, Theonila Matbob; Tuvaluan church minister, Sulufaiga Uota; and Kanaky freedom fighter, Marie-Claude Tjibaou

They are heroes



WOMEN play an integral role in the development of Pacific nations and the region.

As part of the annual 16 Days of Activism, the Pacific Conference of Churches highlighted the role played by women in the church, business, the public service and civil society.

From West Papua to Maohi (French Polynesia), Pacific women stand at

the forefront of development and change. They influence laws in parliament. In business and on corporate boards our women provide sound advice which takes into account the needs of national or regional families.

And they have entered the world of church and theology with Tuvalu ordaining its first women ministers who bring fresh ideas into

a sphere once dominated by men.

Highlighting the advances of women shows that they are valuable members of society, more than mothers - the role in which they are often seen.

It also shows that women deserve respect and support from their families and the community for these achievements.

These are Pacific heroes.

It's time to stop the violence

PACIFIC church leaders convened in Sydney to discuss important matters affecting the region.

Climate change and development were on the agenda along with the plight of Pacific workers in Australia.

But the first order of business was to launch Break The Silence Sunday with a special liturgy at the St Joseph's Retreat Centre, Baulkham Hills. Designed by the Pacific Conference of

women and gender desk, the service encouraged people to speak out - particularly against Gender Based Violence.

This year, West Papuan theologian, Reverend Dr Fransina Yoteni, provided a spiritual reflection for the day and this was shared in 14 Pacific countries. A copy of the liturgy with scriptural references is available at

www.pacificconferenceofchurches.org



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Youth take the lead

Young leaders from the Pacific and Australia gathered for connection-building, leadership development and dialogue at the first Pacific Australian Emerging Leaders Summit starting in November.

The four-day summit, organised by Micah Australia and the Pacific Conference of Churches, gathered emerging leaders aged 22 to 35 to discuss key development priorities for young people and their communities.

The first two days were held at the Australian Parliament and delegates met Australian MPs to share their experiences of critical development and foreign policy issues in the Pacific.

From the Pacific, 34 delegates from 13 Pacific Nations attended, with 13 delegates from diaspora communities in Australia, 12 delegates from First Nations communities in and 32 other Australians.

Priority topics for discussion ,

include climate change, education and youth unemployment, and improving access to water and sanitation, as well as self-determination and inclusion.

Delegate Taaitulagi Tuioti, a lawyer from Samoa, said the summit provided a great opportunity for emerging leaders to develop relationships and forge strong ties.

"Our vision as a delegation is to see healthy environments, empowered young people, and flourishing communities across the Pacific region.

"By forging strong relationships with our counterparts across the Pacific we can help make this vision a reality."

Delegate Biannca Manning, a First Nations young leader from Queensland, said the summit provided an important chance for Indigenous Australians to build partnerships with emerging Pacific leaders.

"As we look to build a resilient ,

healthy and prosperous Pacific we must draw on the ancient wisdom of indigenous peoples from across the region.

"This includes Australia's First Nations peoples who must have a seat at the table when engaging with counterparts and building partnerships."

Micah National Director Matt Darvas said young people played a vital role in the relationship between Australia and Pacific nations.

"With such a high proportion of young people in the region, it is important for countries like Australia to listen deeply to, and build on the strengths of, these young people.

"We believe that the stories, the creativity, and the civic participation of young people will be crucial in building a safer, and more just and sustainable future for our Pacific family.

"The Pacific Australian Emerging Leaders Summit exists – to foster relationships between emerging leaders."



Talanoa Toktok