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MEDIA RELEASE

TITLE: This week happenings

Had a good meeting with Acting Prime Minister Rt Hon Winston Peters this week. I'm pleased to learn there will be more funds however the challenge is to have access to these funds. There appears to be a disconnect between ours and officials and I have requested Deputy Secretary Jonathan Kings to investigate on our behalf. We hope to resolve these soon.

It is also delaying the Australian funded waste plant. It just seems to be a never ending cycle with no conclusion. I discussed the waste project with the Australian High Commissioner to New Zealand expressing my frustration with the delay. It's been four years and still no plant.

Hopefully his interventions will speed things up. Australia is keen to continue its involvement with our waste management and I was pleased and told him so.

Met with a company who can establish a fumigation system without any chemicals. We will await for their proposal but this is very promising. It means that the quarantine staff will not be exposed to dangerous chemicals. I'm just not sure why they haven't been prominent in the Pacific. The fumigation involves controlled heat and can deal with cars machinery, timber but not food or plant material.

We had planned to meet with NZ IRD to discuss the loan repayments that government is offering students with long standing outstanding loans. All students are eligible and should contact Pats or NTDC. The idea is that government will contribute a set annual payment and the students also pay a similar amount. All students are eligible. It will help you in case you get stopped at the airport border by New Zealand authorities from leaving New Zealand.

We have been very careful with loans, or making more money from assets we have. This is partly because we are focused on risk but it is also true that depending on donors can delay certain projects where quick action is needed.

Over the next few months I'll be working with two others to investigate these ideas and options. It's an exciting and intriguing set of ideas which may enable us to be more self-sustaining.

I've been asked why we're setting up a wine bar in completion with other businesses operating these bars. The fact is the wine bar will open when everyone else is closed. So the wine bar is not competing just filling a gap. How many, apart from Matavai is open 6 days a week serving people who enjoy a glass of their favourite wine. Not many if any. So this is the gap we are trying to fill.

I note that Coe is complaining about transparency and lack of records from the SOEs. My belief is that he doesn't know how to read the accounts which are presented annually. The budget will be coming before the house as per the NPNC Act.

He has been attacking the SOEs and Wayne in particular. Well between him and Wiseman, they have tried to damage Niue's international reputation. Just makes it harder but let's face it they can't stop us. We need the money. As I've said before he should have been transparent with .NU domain name. Goodness the money we should have made.

But I digress. He's not worth the hassles really.

I'm pleased with the work of the new Public Service Commission Chair and her partner Commissioner. They are starting on a really great footing. I'm very impressed.

[ENDS]

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