

Launch of the Responsible Tourism Code for the Pacific
Luamanuvao Winnie Laban MP
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E muamua ona ou ta le vai afei ma ou fa'atulou i le paia lasilasi ua fa'atasi mai. Tulou ou ponao'o Samoa i le afio o Tupu ma E'e. Tulou ou Faleupolu. Tulou auauna a le Atua. Ou te fa'atalofa atu i le Paia ma le Mamalu o le aso.

Kia Ora, Malo e lelei. Fakalofa lahi atu. Taloha ni. Ni sa bula vinaka. Mauri. Kia Orana. Talofa lava and warm Pacific greetings to the members and staff of Dev-Zone, New Zealand and Pacific NGOs, community groups and the travel sector.

Thank you for your kind invitation launch the Responsible Tourism Code for the Pacific

Before I formally launch the Code, I would like to take a minute to reflect upon travel, tourism, development and the Pacific.

There are many ways to look at the Pacific, let me offer you two glimpses:

Albert Wendt, the master Pacific story-teller, once wrote:

“So vast, so fabulously varied a scatter of islands, nations, cultures, mythologies and myths, so dazzling a creature, Oceania deserves more than an attempt at mundane fact; only the

imagination in free flight can hope – if not to contain her – to grasp some of her shape, plumage and pain.”

So true. We often recognise the wonderful, colourful plumage of Oceania. We find it harder to recognise the pain. To start to understand the Pacific, we have to open up our imagination, to move beyond ‘mundane facts’, to travel her ocean, to walk her lands, to listen to her people and to understand her pain.

The vastness of the Pacific Ocean and the smallness of the islands can lead to the perception that this is a remote and difficult region: tiny islands separated by hostile seas.

Epeli Hau’ofa, another great story teller, advances a different view of Oceania as:

“...a large world in which people and cultures moved and mingled, unhindered by boundaries of the kind erected much later by imperial powers. From one island to another they sailed to trade and to marry, thereby expanding social networks for greater flows of wealth. They travelled to visit relatives in a wide variety of natural and cultural surroundings, to quench their thirst for adventure, and even to fight and dominate.”

I like Hau’ofa’s expansive view of the Pacific as a sea of islands linked by an ocean that has been a busy highway for millennia. Epeli provides a benign view of globalisation – Pacific style.

Albert Wendt's view is taken in the light and the dark sides. Not all travellers of the Pacific have been benign. Our history of explorers, traders, missionaries, blackbirders and colonists has not always been happy. Today's travellers are bringing drugs, HIVAids and other evils along with their tourist dollars.

One of the challenges the people of the Pacific face is the loss of cultural and spiritual values in a rapidly globalising world.

Travellers and the tourist industry are a two edged machete; they can join with us to enjoy our oceans and lands, and celebrate our cultures and lifestyles, or they 'package' the Pacific as just another tourist 'destination', another commodity.

Travellers can provide an important, sustainable source of income, jobs and opportunities for economic development for our people, or they can incorporate Pacific nations into the trans-national corporatisation of the tourism industry.

We have some development choices here. And the Responsible Tourism Code is an important means to help us make those choices.

The aim of the code is to educate travellers about how to behave more responsibly (both culturally and environmentally, and as informed consumers) while on holiday or travelling in the Pacific.

The Code encourages travellers to learn about the country they plan to travel to. To learn about appropriate cultural behaviour.

The Code encourages travellers to protect fragile coral, and other endangered plants or animals. For example Turtle shell products. To minimise environmental impact, to support local initiatives, to pay a fair price for good and services.

The Code asks travellers to think about their impact, on the environment and the local community, by making your trip a positive experience for the traveller and the people in the country visited.

I understand that Dev-Zone has developed the Responsible Tourism Code for the Pacific, with support from the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO), and the Pacific Island Association of Non-Governmental Organisations.

Congratulations to all involved. Thank you for the great work. I invite you all to visit and enjoy our Pacific, in all it's plumage and pain.

It is now my great pleasure to formally launch the Responsible Tourism Code for the Pacific.

Ia manuia le malaga!