

MPs attend Anti Corruption workshop

By Norma Naatamariki

On Tuesday 19th, an anti-corruption workshop was held at the House of Parliament, where various Members of Parliament were in attendance. Leading the workshop was John Hyde, who is part of the United Nations Pacific Regional Corruption Project (UNPRCP). The main aim of the workshop was to lay emphasis on the importance of anti-corruption with regards to authoritative figures. According to Hyde, governments in countries within the Pacific, particularly when it comes to their natural resources such as their fisheries, must ensure that all contracts and tenders are to be conducted in a transparent way. He also goes on to explain that Parliaments often approve budgets and Parliamentarians have to make sure that they hold governments to account as well as civil service and bureaucracy. "They have to make sure that government money, which is the money of the people of the Cook Islands, is being spent openly, transparently and in the best possible way."

Hyde remarks that the Members of Parliament for the Cook Islands is reviewing a code of conduct for their own



Members of Parliament at the Anti Corruption workshop

behaviour. "This is very good practice, as most people of the community do expect Members of Parliament adhere to the highest possible standards." Hyde goes on further to explain the importance of Members of Parliament discussing what exactly these standards should be, as well as defining the boundaries of ethical conduct.

Hyde comments that over the past twenty years, there has been tremendous progress within the Pacific region. He refers to the recent example of Vanuatu, where 14 MPs' were jailed with the inclusion of the Speaker of Parliament over bribery. "This was a clear breach of ethics as well as their leadership code."

In the global organisation

of Parliamentarians Against Corruption, Hyde has praised our country for its resilience with its the anti-corruption work ethics. "We are delighted to see that the Cook Islands is one of the strongest chapters, not only in the Southern Hemisphere but in the world, for Parliamentarians wanting to take control of anti-corruption."