

MPs aim to combat corruption

COMBATING corruption is the focus at parliament this week with a special United Nations workshop being held to address the contentious issue.

The Cook Islands is a party to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) as well as a member of the Global Organisation of Parliamentarians against Corruption (GOPAC).

Two United Nations staff members are running a two-day workshop, aiming to inform Cook Island Members of Parliament on the requirements and good practices of anti-corruption and UNCAC.

The aim is also to stimulate further consideration of anti-corruption reform in the Cook Islands and strengthen the GOPAC chapter in the Cook Islands which was set up in over four years ago.

The UN's Office on Drugs and Crime regional anti-corruption

adviser Annika Wythes and the UN's Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption project consultant and chair of GOPAC international John Hyde are running the workshop.

Although there is no clear international definition of corruption, it is most known to be the abuse of entrusted power for personal benefit.

And in the case of MPs, corruption can be seen as either an abuse or neglect of their position.

Hyde said women are incredibly vulnerable to corruption, and a new realm of "sexortion" where women are used for sexual favours is emerging as a particularly disturbing area of the issue.

Yesterday Members of Parliament asked many questions about corruption and how to establish its different forms.

Member of Parliament for Titikaveka Selina Napa asked



Minister of Health and GOPAC chairman Nandi Glassie addresses the workshop in parliament yesterday.

how to establish when Members of Parliament have conflicts of interest.

Hyde said this was often dif-

ferent in smaller communities, but for transparency, they need to declare personal interests.

At the workshop today Mem-

bers of Parliament will work to re-establish the GOPAC committee and elect a chairman. GOPAC Cook Islands is cur-

rently chaired by Minister of Health Nandi Glassie.

The workshop will end this afternoon.

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Deputy Prime Minister Teariki Heather said the workshop was important for Cook Islands' Members of Parliament.