



Nauru Bulletin

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Nauru Airlines converts passenger-freighter plane

Nauru Airlines' newly converted 737-300 freighter aircraft registration N732NA arrived home, shortly before lunch on 29 December, after starting her journey from Miami, Florida on Christmas Eve.

The freighter had a successful test flight from Miami, transiting in California and via Honolulu. After refuelling in Nauru it departed for Brisbane, Australia the same day.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions public viewing of the plane's interior was not possible.

The originally 120-seater passenger plane arrived at Commercial Jet's Miami, Florida facility on 26 July and its conversion to a 10-pallet configuration by Aeronautical Engineers Inc., officially commenced on 10 August, making it the second freighter in the fleet.

Nauru Airlines is adapting to changes due to COVID-19 and the increased demand for freight both into Nauru and the Pacific Islands as well as across Australia.

The reduced passenger flights meant extra



Nauru Airlines newly converted freighter plane, ONU, lands in Nauru after her journey from Miami. It is the second freighter aircraft in the fleet

cargo was not being transported either including essentials like fresh food, mail, medicine or other necessities.

The Airline responded by transforming one of its passenger planes to a freight carrier to meet this demand and facilitate freight transport within the region.

Online shopping and moving products via air freight including air freighted postal services was on the rise in Nauru and were maximised by Nauruans and local businesses alike.

While the aviation industry globally is hard hit due to the pandemic, Nauru Airlines, with the support of the Nauru Government has been able to keep the national carrier in the air and making sure Nauru is best placed to continue into the future meeting the needs of Nauru and our people as well as ensuring Nauru Airlines as a business is in a strong commercial position.

The conversion process saw approximately 20 people spend 140 days removing the entire interior fit out, strengthen the door frames and floor beams, and install a main deck cargo door and cargo loading system.

At the end of the process, the newly converted aircraft will have a main deck payload of up to 19,460 kilograms.

As passenger numbers are expected to remain low in coming months, the airline has committed another plane for freight conversion in January 2021 and scheduled for redelivery in May 2021 •

President Aingimea is regional magazine's pacific leader of the year

Regional magazine, *Islands Business*, published in its December edition that President Lionel Aingimea is its "leader of the year".

The publication says the President's leadership and unwavering determination, grit, and a burning desire to save the USP earned him respect and accolades this year.

The report goes on to say, while the University of the South Pacific vice chancellor Professor Pal Ahluwalia is credited with exposing the rot in the regional institute of learning, it is his incoming chancellor that made sure that the vice chancellor kept his job this year.

Many other leaders would have shied away from the crisis that gripped the university leadership. Not Lionel Aingimea though.



President Aingimea shortly after winning the vote in parliament for presidency, August 2019

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President, regional magazine's leader of the year

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He took, as it were, the bulls by the horn, and as President of Nauru and new Chancellor of the university, convened at least three special USP Council virtual meetings to obtain consensus that paved the way for resolution of the year-long impasse.

For his efforts to bring all parties to the negotiating table, take on what some say were the bullying and condescending tactics of Fiji's representatives in the council while doing so, and ensuring Council members hammered out a consensus on the way forward for USP, Nauru's President is without a doubt, Islands Business' Pacific Leader for 2020.

This was no easy feat. The odds it seems were stacked up against him. Aingimea was young, and new, while his opponents were seasoned administrators, some of whom had been working long before the young Nauru lawyer joined his country's civil service.

Yet, if Aingimea was daunted by this, he did not show it. Instead, just 10 months into office, he sent his first letter to the USP Council. It was to be the first of many letters he had to write to push back wave after wave of attempts by Fiji and its representatives to over-rule the Council and remove Ahluwalia.

Meetings of the Council are never open to non-members. But Council members the magazine consulted for this article talk of the respectful but decisive leadership displayed by Aingimea as he brokered the way forward. While some members would lose their temper - raising voices and pointing fingers - the young Nauruan leader steered the discussions firmly and calmly, via teleconferencing, for COVID-19 induced lockdowns made face-to-face meetings impossible.

Those close to the President identified three key factors that guided and helped the Nauru leader throughout the USP saga. One was the fact that he is an alumnus of USP, so there was no need to convince him of the crucial role the university plays in the development of the region.

The second factor was that Aingimea not only studied at the Suva campus, but he also worked there as a lecturer in the university's Law School.

"Having taught at Laucala Bay campus for a number of years, President Aingimea was aware of a number of academic and management issues that plagued the previous administration of Vice Chancellor Rajesh Chandra of Fiji," a senior academic told Islands Business.

"Professor Ahluwalia's confidential report about questionable financial management and senior staff appointments only confirmed what Aingimea and many others had known all along.

"So when he assumed the role of USP Chancellor around June/July this year, President Aingimea took it upon himself to resolve once and for all the leadership saga between Fiji's Winston Thompson/Mahmood Khan and Professor Ahluwalia."

It is no secret that behind the two senior Fiji representatives in the USP Council with Thompson as Council chair, was Fiji's powerful Attorney General Aiyaz Sayed Khaiyum. Staff and students at the Laucala Bay Campus of USP would sight the AG's official vehicle outside Thompson's office on more than one occasion. Khaiyum attended at least two Council meetings in place of his permanent secretary, where he, sources said, forcefully pushed for the sacking of Ahluwalia.

However the numbers were not with him, but with President Aingimea instead. It was Aingimea's visage, not Khaiyum's that was zoomed to the white wall of the university's Japan-ICT conference room whenever the Council met virtually. He steered the discussions; he made the final call.

For standing up to Fiji's intimidating and heavy-handed tactics, unafraid of the repercussions this may cause his small island state, President Lionel Aingimea saved VC Ahluwalia to save USP. At a time when the people of the Pacific looked for decisive and bold leadership from their elected leaders, this Nauru politician delivered. To this, the islands owe him a huge debt of gratitude and appreciation •

[Source: Islands Business]

Radiology receives Rotary water filter

The radiology department at the RON Hospital received a 25 litre water filter donated by the Rotary Club of Nauru, thus providing much needed water for consumption by patients requiring CT scans, 21 December.

Radiologist and head of Diagnostic Services Dr Ovukeraye Oyobere (aka Dr Voke) was presented the water filter by Rotary Club president Lisa Karl who says the filter is good for 100,000 litres of water before needing a filter change.

Dr Voke said on behalf of the RON hospital and "most especially our patients, we want to thank you very, very much for this opportunity."

"You [Rotary] will never know what you have done.

"We witness it from time to time. It's not that they [patients] cannot afford to buy a \$1 water, but the way the structure is there are times you leave your home because the transport is ready and you may not take your wallet, and when you get here, we [staff] say, go and get water," Dr Voke said.



A patient trials the Rotary donated water filter at the radiology department

The doctor explained that a few weeks ago a patient sent his son home to get a dollar to buy water to drink before he could undergo his CT scan.

"So you can imagine how important this [filter] is to us as a department."

Rotary Nauru has in years past donated water filters to the hospital under its water and sanitation projects •

Nauru tucks away eleven COVID drills

Nauru is blessed to be among a handful of nations in the world to remain COVID-free thanks to the government's strict rules in place to keep it that way.

Nauru successfully completed its 11th COVID-19 practice drill - the most challenging and extensive thus far with multiple scenarios unfolding across the island lasting four hours.

The drill on 7 December is developed from the previous 10 community response drills conducted over the past six months, a feat that has only been done in Nauru as part of the government's capture and contain strategy against coronavirus in the community.

The drill commenced at 10am with the COVID Taskforce at the helm calling the critical decisions as events developed in the community, while leading agencies on ground – health, Nauru Police and Nauru Emergency Services effectively manage the three-staged scenario that involves multiple persons being infected and community transmission spreads due to cross contamination from a COVID case at a quarantine facility.

The situation elevates the response tactic to level three which requires some districts to go into full lockdown to contain the virus.

The Taskforce, community leaders and external agencies then work together to provide support and essential services to these districts, thus tests the processes of external agencies to achieve this.

A fire incident also happens towards the end of the drill calling for fire and rescue operations to be activated.

The intent is to co-ordinate the scenario in a way so the Taskforce collaboratively makes strategic decisions to move to response level four, where the nation is under tight restrictions and only essential services are operating. The drill is thoroughly messaged to the community via the Government Information Office, Nauru Media office, and Digicel.

Almost immediately following the World Health Organisation's declaration of the novel coronavirus (nCoV) as a global health pandemic, Nauru's President Lionel Aingimea declared a national emergency for the management and minimisation of the impact of coronavirus on Nauru, 16 March.

The declaration is still in place and incoming travellers must quarantine for five days in designated government quarantine residences upon arrival and undergo COVID-19 testing before being released back into the community.

Strict fines and penalties are in place for any breaches of quarantine.

In his most recent address to the United Nations General Assembly where leaders respond to COVID-19, President Aingimea stated his concerns in the WHO being slow to declare the virus as a global pandemic "thus delaying needed action", but nonetheless says, Nauru looks to the WHO for its research and advisory role on the nature of the virus which Nauru has benefitted from.

In regards to the United Nations, the President says the Pacific region needs a United Nations that is "fit-for-purpose, responsive and works with the big and the small [countries]."

The first of the 10 community response live drills, which culminated in the nation-wide drill was conducted in Ijuw District on 14 May.



Nauru's COVID-19 live drills have covered a broad range of scenarios to prepare the country in the event the virus is introduced to Nauru

The community of Ijuw was very responsive and keen to be the first to test run such a response plan for a disease that had not yet arrived in the country.

The scenario was to respond by capturing and containing a person of interest (POI) that escapes from quarantine at the nearby Meneñ Hotel facility and have him transferred to the COVID-19 Remand Centre. Following procedure are contact tracing and subsequent isolations.

Scenario two on 17 July involved a fire at a quarantine facility the eventuated in two POI's breaching quarantine and leaving the facility.

Fire and rescue services are called in while site management and security staff evacuate residents as per fire evacuation processes.

This particular scenario was a real incident in November and again this month in New Zealand's managed isolation hotels whereby residents were evacuated after a fire alarm was activated.

Scenario three was an airport scene involving 200 personnel from airport and emergency services including community liaison officers.

The scenario involved three levels of emergencies: a symptomatic passenger on board; a bird strike causing the plane engine to catch fire; and an aircraft and airport emergency evacuation.

Drills four and five ran in succession on 5 November across two locations where a symptomatic resident attends the NRPC1 to be treated for flu-like symptoms, including a COVID-19 test.

The POI then returns a positive result which then initiates the national and NRPC1 response plans. Contact tracing then identifies the POI had come into contact with a worker at another district, thus the lockdown of that second facility.

A week later on 12 November were drills six and seven which unfolds at the Meneñ quarantine station involving multiple breaches by residents and one close contact in the community resulting in the remanding of one person.

First and foremost, the mission of the drill is to capture and contain the person of interest who has been in close contact with family members living at the Meneñ quarantine station after which they are taken to the COVID-19 designated Remand Centre.

Drills eight and nine were played out on 21 November commencing at the Nauru Port in Aiwo, which involves the scheduled arrival of a cargo ship and a crew member displaying flu-like symptoms, which leads to a breach of maritime protocols and port policies.

Nauru tucks away eleven COVID drills

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The tenth drill before the national drill, was conducted on 26 November whereby a person who has had flu-like symptoms for five days is now struggling to breathe, and is taken from his home to the hospital for immediate medical attention.

The intent of the scenario is to test the effectiveness of the hospital's internal response plans.

The aim of the response plans are to capture and contain, prevent and reduce the widespread transmission of coronavirus in the community and minimise its impact in Nauru.

The Nauru Government is grateful for the community's continue assistance and cooperation on all the drills conducted around the island as the Taskforce and emergency services carry out various drills, training and messaging intended to educate and keep the Nauruan community well informed of developments and management of a possible outbreak of coronavirus in the community.

Nauru port attends 7th shipping AGM

The seventh annual general meeting of the Central Pacific Shipping Commission (CPSC) was held virtually from 9-11 December to discuss and review the current international shipping services by shipping companies under licence to the CPSC.

Deputy Minister for Ports Russ Kun and his management team attended the meeting virtually from their office in Aiwo.

The AGM reviewed the performances of these main shipping companies/operators and agreed to further extend the validity of their shipping licences that are due for expiry on 1 January 2021 for another year to allow CPSC to consider options for issuance of licences post 2021.

However, with the exception that Neptune Pacific Line's licence for its shipping service to Nauru will not be extended after 31 December 2020, as decided by Nauru.

This decision will not prejudice Neptune Pacific Line providing its shipping services to other CPSC member countries.

The AGM also noted the establishment of the Nauru Shipping Line (NSL) and its shipping service between Fiji and Nauru and its intention to service other CPSC member countries in the future was invited.

Other matters discussed at the meeting include the administrative and financial status of the CPSC, its work activities for 2021 as well as CPSC member countries' reports presentations.

The CPSC is a grouping of five member countries: Nauru, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, and Wallis and Futuna.

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services has developed a 4-stage national response plan however all departments are tasked with developing their own response plans using the national plan as a guide.

With no cases on the island, Nauru is at response level one which includes border control measures, response preparedness for the next levels and heightened public awareness to level four, the final level.

Level four would be triggered should community transmission and COVID-19 infection clusters arise, at which point all restrictions would be tightened to minimise the impact of transmission in the community and all efforts focused on responding to the crisis.

President Lionel Aingimea says "Nauru's historical experience is our key to surviving this pandemic."

"We heeded the lessons of the past - that an outbreak in one part of the world can produce a catastrophic and devastating effect on our tiny country if we do not act quickly. We are not immune to outbreaks even though we are geographically isolated from other countries," President Aingimea said •



Deputy Minister for Nauru Ports Russ Kun (centre) leads the Nauru discussions at the 7th AGM of the CPSC

It constitutes an executive body of ministers responsible for maritime transportation and port operations and supported by a technical committee with representatives from each member country and an interim secretariat through the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

The main shipping companies/operators which provide international shipping service to the CPSC member countries are Swire Shipping Company, Kyowa, Pacific Direct Line (PDL), Neptune Pacific Line (NPL), Matson, NYK, and Ocean Network Express (ONE).

A special meeting of the CPSC will be held in March 2021 to review the CPSC Impact Assessment study report and to determine what process to follow with the renewal of the shipping licenses for 2022 •

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Taiwan donates sale proceeds to PWD

Secretary for the Department for People with Disability Riddell Akua humbly accepted a donation of \$3000 -- proceeds from the quarterly charity egg sale by the Taiwan Embassy, 19 December.

“I extend my very best thank you to the Republic of China (Taiwan) and especially to the Ambassador for this very generous donation,” Mr Akua said and explained that the funds will go towards the department’s independent advocacy work.

The Embassy has held charity egg and vegetable sales over several years, donating the proceeds to disadvantaged, minority groups or sporting organisations to assist with their advocacy work and internal developments •



Taiwan Ambassador Dean Wang hands over the donation to PWD secretary Riddell Akua

President hosts Christmas banquet

His Excellency President Lionel Aingimea conveyed good wishes to the Nauruan people and guests in attendance at the President’s annual Christmas banquet held at the Meneñ Hotel, where the young and seniors alike enjoyed a night of entertainment and good food as is tradition at the President’s banquet which is the closing function to each year, 18 December •



*Wishing our audience
happy and blessed
holidays and a safe and
prosperous New Year!
God bless!*

The Nauru Bulletin is a fortnightly publication of the Government of the Republic of Nauru.

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Republic of Nauru

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