

THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE KINGDOM OF TONGA ON POLITICAL REFORM

Background:

The establishment and work of the National Committee on Political Reform (NCPR) is a major step forward in building national unity and thus promoting the social and economic advancement of the People of Tonga. The motion for the formation of a National Committee of the Kingdom of Tonga on Political Reform was passed by the Legislative Assembly on the 12th of October 2004. On the 24th of October 2005 the House resolved that:

1. The National Committee shall consist of:
 - (i) One Minister nominated by the Prime Minister;
 - (ii) One Noble nominated by the Nobles who are members of the Legislative Assembly;
 - (iii) Two People's Representatives nominated by members of the People's Representatives in the Legislative Assembly;
 - (iv) The Member of Parliament who put forward the motion;
 - (v) Four persons appointed by the National Committee from eminent Tongan citizens who are not in the Government's employ; and
 - (vi) There will also be a reserve list of 4 members each to be selected in the same manner as for category (i), (ii), (iii), and (v) respectively, in case the Committee cannot make quorum.

2. The National Committee shall elect a Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Secretariat. The quorum for the meetings of the National Committee shall be 4 members.

The rest of the Terms of Reference was left to the sole discretion of the Committee. The first meeting of the National Committee was held on the 18th of November 2005. On the 22nd of November 2005 His Majesty's Government agreed to co-operate with and support the work of the National Committee of the Kingdom of Tonga on Political Reform.

The National Committee is now implementing, over a six-month period, the processes of its work schedule based on the Terms of Reference as given below. The recommendations of the National Committee will ultimately be determined by its findings.

Terms of Reference of NCPR

Purpose and Objectives:

The National Committee shall receive and consider submissions, hold consultations, and facilitate talanoa relating to political and constitutional reforms and recommend legislation and/or other changes with a view to building national unity and promoting the social and economic advancement of the people of Tonga.

Functions and Processes:

To realize the purpose and achieve the objectives as set out above, the National Committee shall:

1. Hold public meetings and consultations and facilitate talanoa throughout Tonga and, at the committee's discretion, overseas with the Tongan people of New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America.
2. Prepare papers in Tongan and English on the purpose and objectives of the Committee and publicize such papers in such a manner so as to fully inform and assist the public, with respect to meetings, consultation, talanoa, and in making submissions to the Committee.
3. Conduct an opinion poll, or delegate some such exercise to an independent institution or persons, if deemed necessary for the completeness of the final report and recommendations.
4. Seek funding for this project from local or international organisations, parties or individuals as may be able to assist.
5. Prepare and publish recommendations on its findings in Tongan and English.
6. Submit the report of its findings, together with appropriate recommendations, to His Majesty the King in Privy Council at

the end of May 2006 (or on such extended date as may be requested by the National Committee and approved by the Legislative Assembly; but in no event shall the final date for reporting extend beyond August 1, 2006).

7. Report its findings together with appropriate recommendations, as submitted to His Majesty the King in Privy Council, to the Legislative National Assembly after one month from the end of May 2006 (or on such extended date as may be requested by the National Committee and approved by the Legislative Assembly; but in no event shall the final date for reporting extend beyond September 1, 2006).

In order to better enable the Committee to carry these functions and processes into effect, its members shall not at any time publicly or otherwise disclose, except by the Committees direction, the contents of any report so made or to be made by the Committee, or any evidence or information received by the Committee except such evidence or information as is received in any process open to the public.

A media sub-committee, comprising of the Chairman, People's Representative Clive Edwards and Dr. Sitiveni Halapua, has been appointed to keep the public informed and to issue any press releases.