

# Te Ui Ariki Ngateitei o te Kuki Airani

The Hereditary Kings and Queens of the Sovereign Kingdom of the Cook Islands

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The Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP  
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
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22 August 2014

Dear Foreign Secretary,

I am writing to you today in my capacity as Ambassador Plenipotentiary to the UK for Te Ui Ariki Ngateitei o te Kuki Airani (Hereditary Kings and Queens of the Cook Islands) as explained in my letter to you dated 16 July, which was signed for at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 28 July 2014.

The Ariki are disappointed to note that the current, illegally installed, government of the Cook Islands has still not been dissolved and stood down as per the Letters Patent issued by the Ariki of the Cook Islands. These Letters Patent were brought into effect on 06 April 2014. The Ariki would also like to respectfully point out to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, and Her Government, the following points in relation to the situation in the Cook Islands:

- 1. The Cook Islands education and tourism minister, Teina Bishop, has resigned just a day after early elections were called for July.**

Mr Bishop, who was previously the marine resources minister, has been under police investigation for alleged bribery and corruption. The former minister is being probed in relation to his connection with fishing company, Huanan Fishery.

- 2. In the election of July 09 2014, the initial count pointed toward a win for the Democratic Party but a huge surge of last minute declaration and postal votes turned the result, raising questions of corruption.**

More than 1,236 votes, including postal votes, were added at the last minute, swaying the result to the CIP. When you consider that the Cook Islands only have a population of around 14,000 then there is bound to be suspicions of corruption.

- 3. Prime Minister Henry Puna has been formally accused of bribing Manihiki voters with outboard motors and free flights in the lead-up to the general election.**

Democratic Party candidate Tereapii Piho has filed a petition with the High Court. Piho, a pearl farmer, alleges that Puna committed six acts of bribery to induce people to vote for him or refrain from voting.

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He claims Puna provided a man and his grand-daughter with free flights to Rarotonga six days before the election and that, at a public meeting on June 24, Puna “offered every household in the electorate of Manihiki, a 15 HP (horsepower) outboard engine” if he was voted in. Piho also alleges that Mayor Ngamata Napara gave \$400 to one voter while acting as an agent for Puna.

- 4. Another claim is that the Government repaired 85 aluminium boats in Manihiki between April 23 and July 3, a service Piho sees as bribery.**
- 5. Eight separate allegations of bribery, treating, and undue influence are laid out in court documents recently filed by defeated Atiu candidate Norman George.**

According to the documents, Brown and her husband Taoro Strickland Brown – described as the owners of the Super Brown Store in Atiu – are alleged to have bribed voters with gifts such as a \$4500 200CC Fiver Trail motorcycle, a second-hand 100CC Daelim motorcycle worth roughly \$1000, and a \$1450 brand new Simpson washing machine.

Free petrol and diesel, free use of a forklift and excavator, and free use of government carpenters to re-roof a home on the island are also alleged to have been gifted by Brown and her husband to bribe voters

- 6. Speaking from Manihiki, Puna – leader of the Cook Islands Party - said he will be visiting the Head of State “as soon as possible”, where it is expected he will look to have his new government sworn in.**

Results indicated a sliver of a majority in the 24-seat Parliament for CIP, which came ahead in 13 constituencies – the majority of those seats in the outer islands. It is unclear how a swearing-in ceremony at Government House would take shape, as the Queen’s Representative, Tom Marsters, is currently attending the 20th Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland. Queries to the office of the Head of State for specific details on the trip and post-election responsibilities of the QR were left unanswered.

The PM’s earlier comments fall in line with an account from a source, who said Puna will have to present himself to the Queen’s Representative – in this case the Chief Justice, as QR Tom Marsters is overseas - and declare, with evidence, that he has the command of the majority of Members of Parliament.

- 7. Puna has now stated there is no requirement for him to be sworn in for another term, and his government will be affirmed with full legislative powers in Parliament, once petitions are dealt with by the courts.**

“There is no need to go to the Queen’s Representative,” the PM said. “The law is quite clear.”

The same advice applies to his Cabinet members, said Puna, adding their pre-election ministerial warrants are still valid. In accordance with Section 29 of the Cook Islands constitution, a sitting of Parliament must

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be held no later than 90 days after general elections, meaning MPs must gather for their first session by October 9.

It is becoming apparent that the current situation is completely untenable and the Sovereign Kings and Queens of the Cook Islands look forward to Her Majesty's government's response in due course, and the ratification of Their Letters Patent at Her Majesty's earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,



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Kevin Anthony Allmond  
Ambassador Plenipotentiary to the UK  
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