



Minutes: VTA Annual General Meeting

Friday 17th April 2009, 2-4pm, La Vela Restaurant ▲ = M▲ion = Action

Present: Lolesio Lui, Janine Le Strange, Doug McNally, Bruno Toke, Sapate Toke, Ngatu Pasikala, Kurt Carlson, Emma Shepherdson, Ongo Kaihea, Baker Hardin, Jeff LeStrange, Paul Stone, Lawrence Hall, Alistair Coldrick, Terry Hunt, Kerris Adlam, Allan Bowe, Saskia Nauenberg, Selu Fukofuka, 'Epli Lavaki, Scott Yurchesen, Lucy Fa'anunu, Chad Michels, Lawrence Hall, Sola & Inayat

Apologies: Hon. Minister Fineasi Funaki, Sandra & Henk Gros, Lisa & Ben Newton, Jason Angress, Lisa Molloy & Greg Just, Shaz Ball, Gordon Allison, Mike & Lori Smith

Introduction and Welcome

- Opening Prayer by Mr Bruno Toke
- Lolesio Lui (President) opened the meeting, welcoming members and non-members

President's Report

- Lole gave an overview of the past year and VTA involvement.
- Lole concluded that 2008 was a challenging year for the VTA and for tourism in Vava'u. Vava'u lost many key tourism sites, including the Paradise Hotel, Bounty Bar and other local businesses to fire. This affected many tourism operators as well as local people in Vava'u.
- Throughout 2008, VTA continued to support TVB Vava'u by hosting travel writers and agents, both as an association and as individual members.
- Lole thanked all those who donated services and time to support travel writers/agents throughout the year.

- VTA Constitution was signed off in Nuku'alofa this year, which has been the VTA's major achievement. Lole thanked all those involved in getting the constitution to this stage.
- Other long-standing issues in Vava'u that VTA worked on in the last year has been the VTA moorings, and VTA will continue to get these moorings either deployed or repaired.
- Lole concluded his report by urging the tourism industry to work together for the good of Vava'u as a whole. VTA cannot succeed without the support of the entire tourism industry.
- Lole wished the new committee good luck, and for a better year to come.

Treasurer's Report

- Ngatu presented the Treasurer's Report as of March 31st 2009.
- VTA had 37 members and a total bank balance of \$8,521.07 which included money earmarked for Tuna Festival and Princess Patron of the Whales
- **Motion** to accept Treasurer's Report: Paul Stone; **Seconded:** Allan Bowe



- Airport Brochure Stand 2008
- VTA has paid \$1150 for 2 years rental of space at the airport. The stand has not been a success with only a few businesses opting to pay for an A4 slot. Businesses with spaces have not kept brochures up, leaving an empty space in the airport reflecting badly on the VTA. The question was raised on how we should proceed with the airport stand.
- Paul Stone suggested that as a paid-up stand member, the stand should not be continued – it has not been successful and is costing VTA money.
- Janine added that space is already paid for for another year. \$50 is not a high cost for front line advertising exposure. She asked that VTA promote the stand for another year to see if it can work.
- Bruno stated that the airport is not the best place for advertising in Vava'u as most people already have accommodation etc arranged when they arrive

- The possibility of a refund had not been explored by the VTA but it was generally concluded that this would not be likely.
- **Motion** to vote on the issue: **Proposed:** Jeff LeStrange; **Seconded:** Paul Stone
- **Vote:** 8 in favour of keeping board for another year, 5 against
- Airport Stand a recommended action for the incoming committee.

Tourism Tonga Report: Paul Stone (Secretary)

- Paul gave an overview of the new nation-wide tourism association, Tourism Tonga.
- Last year, the government put together the NEDC which acts as an umbrella organisation for a range of industries, one of them being tourism
- Sue Gardiner of Tongatapu was approached at the end of last year to develop the tourism organisation for the NEDC – which has become Tourism Tonga (TT)
- TT is an organisation which represents the tourism industry to Government. It covers all of Tonga and has representatives from each island group.
- The Vava'u representatives are Paul Stone, Allan Bowe and Lolesio Lui
- The first meeting of TT was held in January, a second will be held next week (executive committee, Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism will be present). TT aims to hold a committee meeting every 2 months
- TT is incorporated – constitution passed prior to first meeting. TT has full government support, mostly because of its Tonga-wide approach.
- TT has currently secured approx. T\$70,000 from Government and NZAid for the development of a marketing survey and marketing strategy. Government is also working on developing a tourism strategy, through the NZAid tourism project, so projects will dovetail into each other.
- TT is currently seeking funding for a secretary position
- TT campaigned to save the Nuku'alofa-LAX Air New Zealand flight through a joint operation of TT, Tongan Government, Samoan Government and Air New Zealand.

- Paul was asked if he felt TT was in competition with VTA, particularly in reference to funding. VTA was turned down funding from NZAid recently, who stated funds were given to TT instead.
- Paul did not agree, TT covers the whole of Tonga so is not competing, but working together with VTA and other associations. There is also regional funding available through TT. The outer islands have a solid vote, and now through TT have the power to pull together and not be overwhelmed by Tongatapu. TT offers more of a voice for the outer islands.
- A concern was raised that there are too many groups doing the same thing – needs to be good co-ordination with Ministry of Tourism. Paul reiterated that both the PM and Minister of Tourism would be present at next week's meeting. A major goal of TT is to work closely with Government and Ministry of Tourism so that industry can have a say.
- It was made clear that it is 'early days' for TT – so far only one meeting has been held, and this AGM was the first official meeting between TT and VTA.
- Paul was asked how he thought VTA and TT could work better together, to which he replied that VTA could become a member of TT
- **Motion** for VTA to join TT: **Proposed:** Baker Hardin; **Seconded:** Doug McNally
- **Voted** 7 for, 0 against.


Ministry Presentation – Ministry of Tourism Vava'u, Mr Bruno Toke

- Bruno gave a presentation from TVB Vava'u.
- Tourism Week in December – Many operators have questioned why this event is held in December (not tourism season). Bruno raised this concern with Ministry of Tourism, who replied this event is for domestic and overseas-Tongan tourism rather than non-Tongan tourism. This event is likely to occur again in December, but is not yet confirmed
- Bruno reminded newcomers about licensing – tourism licenses are valid for one year and must be renewed after 31st December. Licenses are issued by Ministry of Tourism, payment must be made through Ministry of Labour, Commerce and Industries.
- Operator information on Ministry of Tourism website (www.tongaholiday.com) is the responsibility of the operators to keep updated. All information can go

directly to webmaster at Ministry of Tourism, Tongatapu. Please also keep your email addresses updated with TVB Vava'u

- Bruno thanked those businesses who had supported TVB by hosting travel writers and agents this year and appealed particularly to restaurant owners to provide support in the future.
- Bruno talked about the need to work together in Vava'u, and to work with the TVB in not providing false information to new comers. Both Bruno and Sapate (MLCI) have had problems recently with new comers to Vava'u being provided incorrect information by more established operators.

Review of VTA Membership Fees

- It was discussed at the AGM whether VTA should change Membership fees.
 - Membership fees were just paid for the year, but it could be an issue for the new VTA committee to discuss and raise at a General Meeting in 2009 for 2010 implementation.
 - Some VTA members stated they would not object to an increase in membership fees if they could see the value in what they were receiving from VTA
 - Others felt the fee should be lowered to attract more individual operators to get involved (eg taxi drivers and handicraft stall owners)
 - It was agreed that the issue was around attracting more members, rather than keeping current small membership numbers and increasing payment. The core issue is not the fee – it is already low enough and still people are not joining. Need as many people involved as possible and look to other sources for funding.
 - A suggestion was raised that VTA think about structured payment (corporate, individual fees)
 - VTA should promote the value of joining the association. Possibly promote it in upcoming TVB Tourism Awareness Campaign to get more individual operators involved.
-  - **Motion** for incoming committee to review membership fee and possible structured approach: **Proposed:** Jeff LeStrange; **Seconded:** Paul Stone

General Business

- Paul Stone announced that with the current economic situation, and political problems in Fiji, now is a good time to get your business name out to travel writers/agents
- Allan Bowe raised the issue of the defunct ferries at the Neiafu Wharf. The boats are near wrecks and have been tied there for months. As Vava'u reaches its peak yacht season, these ferries may cause problems for yachts, tourism, Customs and the Ports Authority. They also promote a bad image in the harbour.
- VTA should lodge complaint to Marine & Ports with these concerns
- **Motion** for letter: **Proposed:** Paul Stone; **Seconded:** Terry Hunt.
- Letter tabled by Bruno Toke from three local villages, requesting donations for their water supply system. There has been a recent serious outbreak of Typhoid in these villages, due to poor water conditions. VTA members asked to donate if they wish through Bruno at TVB.
- As outgoing President, Lole thanked the committee for their hard work over the last year, the TVB, Emma and all those who supported the VTA over the last year.
- Emma was presented with a letter of thanks and a gift for her voluntary secretarial work with the VTA over the last 6 months

VTA 2009 Committee Elections

- Outgoing committee stepped down and all paid VTA members moved to one side.
- Elections were conducted by Emma as a neutral non-member of VTA.
- Call for nominations of President:
- **Janine LeStrange** - Nominated: Alistair Coldrick, Seconded: Terry Hunt
- **Kurt Carlson** - Nominated: Doug McNally, Seconded: Alistair Coldrick

- **Lolesio Lui** - Nominated: Ngatu Pasikala, Seconded: Allan Bowe
- After the votes were tallied, **Janine LeStrange** was announced as President of VTA 2009

- Call for nominations of Vice President:
- **Kurt Carlson** – Nominated: Alistair Coldrick, Seconded: Ngatu Pasikala
- **Kurt Carlson** was announced as Vice President of VTA 2009

- Call for nominations of Treasurer:
- **Baker Hardin** – Nominated: Alistair Coldrick, Seconded: Lole Lui
- **Baker Hardin** was announced as Treasurer of VTA 2009

- Call for nominations of Secretary:
- **Doug McNally** – Nominated: Terry Hunt, Seconded: Lole Lui
- **Doug McNally** was announced as Secretary of VTA 2009

- Call for nominations of Committee Members (5):
- **Lucy Fa'anunu** - Nominated: Janine LeStrange, Seconded: Terry Hunt
- **Gordon Allison** - Nominated: Alistair Coldrick, Seconded: Baker Hardin
- **Ongo Kaihea** - Nominated: Terry Hunt, Seconded: Ngatu Pasikala
- **'Epli Lavaki** – Nominated: Lole Lui; Seconded: Ngatu Pasikala
- **Selu Fukofuka** – Nominated: Ngatu Pasikala, Seconded: Lole Lui

- Call for nominations of Alternate Members (2):
- **Lolesio Lui** – Nominated: Janine LeStrange, Seconded: Ngatu Pasikala

- **Jeff LeStrange** – Nominated: Janine LeStrange, Seconded: Lole Lui

- Incoming President, Janine LeStrange, thanked everyone for their votes, welcomed and congratulated the new committee and welcomed participants to attend the sausage sizzle and social event to follow the meeting.

Next meeting: Committee Meeting, Wednesday 22nd April 2009, 2-4pm La Vela Deck

Meeting Closed: 3.55pm
