

Aide-Mémoire

Meeting with Prime Minister of Niue, Hon Dalton Tagelagi

Date due to MO: 12 November 2025 **Date of Meeting:** 14 November 2025

Security level: IN CONFIDENCE **Reference:** H2025075082

To: Minister of Health, Hon Simeon Brown

Consulted: Health New Zealand: ☒

Proactive release: This **title** is proposed by the Ministry of Health for proactive release: ☒

Contact for telephone discussion

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About the Meeting

Purpose of Meeting You are meeting with Niue Prime Minister Hon Dalton Tagelagi to discuss mutual health interests.

Details of Meeting

Date: 14 November 2025
Time: 2:00pm – 2:30pm (arrive by 1:50pm)
Venue: The Horizon Hotel, 85-93 Hobson Street, Auckland – The Welcome Room, Ground Floor

Niue Attendees Hon Dalton Tagelagi, Prime Minister of Niue
Peleni Talagi, Secretary of Government
Doreen Siataga, Finance Secretary
Tagaloa (Loa) Morrissey, Chief of Staff

New Zealand Attendees Pauline Fuimaono Sanders, National Director Pacific Health (Acting), Health New Zealand
Mark Gibb, New Zealand High Commissioner to Niue, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Hannah Frost, Senior Policy Officer, Polynesia and French Pacific Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Comment/Summary:

- Prime Minister Tagelagi has requested to meet with you as part of his visit to New Zealand for the inaugural annual NZ/Niue leaders' meeting.
- The Government of Niue expressed interest in discussing a
 - proposal to establish a direct link between Niue and New Zealand health systems
 - enabling Niuean patients to access medical services in NZ with seamless record-sharing
 - continued collaboration between Health Ministries.

Biography: Hon Dalton Tagelagi, Prime Minister of Niue



Hon Dalton Tagelagi [Tongue-eh-lang-ee] was elected Prime Minister in June 2020 and re-elected in April 2023.

He is a fifth term Member of Niue's General Assembly, representing Niue's most populous village constituency of Alofi South. We expect Prime Minister Tagelagi to stand in the upcoming elections due early 2026.

Prime Minister Tagelagi is in Auckland to attend the inaugural annual NZ/Niue leaders' meeting with Prime Minister Luxon on 13 November and to sign a political declaration. He will also meet with a range of other Ministers.

Background and context

1. This meeting briefing provides you with information to support your meeting with Niue Prime Minister Hon Dalton Tagelagi to discuss Niue's interest in health sector collaboration.
2. In particular, the Government of Niue has expressed interest in establishing a direct health system link between New Zealand and Niue and facilitating health record-sharing to enable Niuean patients to receive care in New Zealand.

New Zealand-Niue Health Relations

3. Niue is a self-governing territory in free association with New Zealand, a status established in 1974. Under this arrangement, the approximately 1,564 to 1,689 Niueans living in Niue are New Zealand citizens, granting them the right to live in New Zealand and access our public services, including healthcare.
4. Both governments reaffirmed their commitment through a Statement of Partnership signed in July 2022, which sets principles for collaboration in priority areas including health.
5. Niue's health system is managed by the Niue Department of Health, with Niue Foou Hospital serving as the central facility for primary and secondary care. For tertiary and specialist services, patients are transferred to New Zealand. This arrangement is supported by emergency evacuation services and annual visits from New Zealand-based specialists. Most elective surgeries for Niuean patients occur in New Zealand.
6. While Niue manages its own health system, it benefits from New Zealand's support in areas such as funding, workforce development and emergency response. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, New Zealand provided vaccines, training, and logistical support to Niue to facilitate its vaccination rollout.
7. There have been some recent health exchanges with Niue as outlined in an Aide-Mémoire titled 'Sharing workforce insights with Niue' which was shared with your office on 14 March [HNZ00073455]. This paper provided an update on outstanding actions arising from bilateral meetings that the previous Minister of Health, Hon Shane Reti, held with Pacific nations in 2024. It also included a workforce update for discussion with Niue.

Supporting Niueans in New Zealand

8. Niueans represent one of the smallest Pacific ethnic groups in New Zealand but maintain strong cultural and familial ties with Niue. Key statistics include:
 - 34,944 Niuean people live in New Zealand (2023 Census) which is over 20 times more than those living in Niue (approx. 1,564–1,689).
 - This community is predominantly New Zealand-born (over 90%), young (median age of 22.9 years), and Auckland-based (approximately 75%).
 - 74 Niuean doctors are registered in NZ (making up 14.9% of all Pacific doctors) and 127 Niuean nurses are registered in NZ (making up 4.8% of all Pacific nurses).
9. Key health challenges faced by Niueans in New Zealand include heart disease, type 2 diabetes, heart attacks, dementia and stomach cancer. Many of these are linked to preventable risk factors like poor nutrition, physical inactivity, smoking and unmanaged chronic conditions.
10. Under the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022, the New Zealand Ministry of Health is mandated to address health disparities among Māori and Pacific populations. This includes developing targeted health strategies and collaborating with community organisations to improve health outcomes.
11. Te Mana Ola (Pacific Health Strategy) outlines a 10-year vision to improve health outcomes for all Pacific Peoples, including peoples from Realm countries – Niue, Cook Islands and Tokelau. It sets a strong expectation for the health system to respond to the diverse needs of Pacific communities by examining data through an ethnic-specific lens.

Links between Niue and New Zealand health systems

Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) between Health NZ and the Niue Department of Health

12. Historically, MoUs have formalised health cooperation between New Zealand health agencies and Pacific Realm counterparts, including Niue. These MoU were previously signed between relevant Pacific Ministries of Health and District Health Boards (DHBs). Although all MoUs have now expired, healthcare continues under the Treaty of Free Association, and renewal discussions are underway.
13. The Niue MoU expired in 2022 and a refreshed MoU between Health NZ and the Niue Department of Health is currently under negotiation, with several meetings having taken place between officials. It is expected that Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade will also be a co-signatory. Similar processes are also in progress for the Cook Islands and Tokelau.
14. Under the MoU, opportunities raised by Niue officials (as outlined in HNZ00073455) include:
 - a. Support to develop workforce planning and strategy
 - b. Enabling a clinician-to-clinician telehealth system to enable access to New Zealand clinical expertise in multiple specialties. This currently only happens informally through existing professional relationships
 - c. Implementing a structured workforce exchange programmes with New Zealand

15. These initiatives would improve access to specialist care, upskill Niuean health professionals, and strengthen local capacity, reducing reliance on patient transfers to New Zealand. The benefits include enhanced continuity of care, cost savings from fewer evacuations and improved health outcomes through timely interventions.

Proposal to implement an NHI system

16. The proposal to establish a direct link using National Health Index (NHI) numbers aims to enable seamless record-sharing and improve continuity of care for Niuean patients in New Zealand, aligning with Treaty and partnership principles. While Niue manages its own health system and the existing MoU is non-binding, the renewed MoU will formalise collaboration focused on improving access to hospital care, service development, and quality improvement rather than funding digital integration projects.
17. Health NZ advises that implementing an NHI system for Niue would require careful consideration and scoping to include:
 - a. Technical feasibility: integration with Health NZ's digital infrastructure and privacy compliance
 - b. Legislative and policy implications: ensuring data sovereignty and security, and adherence to New Zealand health information standards
 - c. Operational readiness: training, governance and phased implementation to minimise service disruption
 - d. Opportunities: enhanced clinician-to-clinician communication, improved patient safety, and streamlined referral processes.

Enabling Niuean patients to access medical services in New Zealand with seamless record-sharing

18. Currently, the process of referring Niuean patients for treatment in New Zealand is manual, involving multiple steps and stakeholders for each patient referral.
19. All referrals must be approved by Niue's Director of Health (DoH), including those recommended by visiting specialists. Health NZ then coordinates care and manually issues discharge information to both the referring doctor and the DoH to ensure continuity of care. These tasks rely on paper-based or email exchanges, creating risks of delays, incomplete information transfers, and errors in communication, which can impact continuity of care and patient safety.
20. Health NZ advises that implementing a record-sharing system with Niue would require careful consideration and scoping to include:
 - a. Technical infrastructure assessment: Niue's health system should be assessed for appropriate digital infrastructure and secure connectivity to integrate with Health NZ platforms
 - b. Data privacy and governance: cross-border record-sharing requires compliance with privacy laws, data and cyber security standards, and formal agreements
 - c. Resource and capability contracts: limited technical expertise and funding in Niue make implementing and maintaining secure systems challenging

- d. Process and policy alignment: Manual referral and discharge processes create delays and require harmonised protocols for patient identification and data exchange
- e. Stakeholder engagement and adoption: Clinician reliance on informal networks and low digital familiarity may slow adoption of formal record-sharing systems.

New Zealand support to health sector in Niue

- 21. MFAT (through its International Development Cooperation programme) provides annual budget and sector support to Niue. s 9(2)(b)(ii)
- 22. Niue is a country partner in the Polynesian Health Corridors (PHC) programme (NZD 30m, 2024–29) which is funded by MFAT and managed by the Ministry of Health. PHC aims to strengthen health system linkages across six countries (including Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Tokelau and Tuvalu) to improve population health outcomes.
- 23. In 2024–25, PHC supported Niue with:
 - a. Improved health security through COVID-19 response measures, infectious disease management, and travel advisory information related to the current NZ measles outbreak
 - b. Improved access to essential medicines via supply chain audits, software functionality, and health workforce training
 - c. Designing non-communicable disease initiatives, including cervical cancer screening, a cancer registry, improving palliative care, and a mental health prevalence survey in February 2026.

Measles cross-border management

- 24. New Zealand and Niue maintain close collaboration to manage cross-border health threats, building on COVID-19 preparedness efforts that strengthened disease surveillance, information sharing, and coordinated responses.
- 25. Despite the current threat of measles outbreaks in many countries, Niue, alongside other Pacific Island nations, were verified to have eliminated measles in September 2025. Niue has 100% vaccination coverage for both doses of measles vaccine, above the 95% threshold needed for population herd immunity and to prevent a measles outbreak.
- 26. To mitigate risks, New Zealand health agencies have agreed on a cross-agency plan to mitigate the risk of the exportation of measles cases from New Zealand into the Pacific. This covers outbreak information sharing, aligned border health messaging, and measures to boost measles vaccination among Pacific peoples and travellers.

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