

**38<sup>th</sup> CPA AUSTRALIA, PACIFIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE – ADELAIDE**  
**18-21 NOV 2019**

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR MP MANUELA KITAI – AITUTAKI, COOK**  
**ISLANDS**

Kia Orana Kotou Katoatoa-May you live long is what these words of Greetings say to each and everyone.

I am a new Member of Parliament of the Democratic Opposition Party from the June 14 2018 Election and a first time candidate, for the beautiful popular destination of about 7,000 thousand tourists from all over the world, the Outer Island Aitutaki-Cook Islands. If you look it up on Google you will book your seat to come and visit me straightaway as it will blow you away with its natural beauty!!

Why did I run for election you might ask, well in 2017, I ran for the local Island Council election and lost by only 3 votes and when the 4 yearly election for Members of Parliament came up in 2018, my supporters of the Council election felt that it would make sense for me to run as one of the 3 Members on the Island to be their representative/voice in the highest decision making body of the country - the Parliament.

I have attended 3 Parliament sittings since my success, I am a Member of the Bills Select Committee and you might ask, how do I feel as a new Member? I feel good

because it's a new challenge, it's a good experience and first it was not what I expected but since having to sit in Parliament I got to see and feel the role & responsibilities of a Member of Parliament in serving the people in many ways that are rewarding.

I like the feeling of representing my people and speaking on their behalf and also making decisions for the Nation as a whole and making sure that our government is doing the right thing with our Nation's resources, the debate on the funds allocated to the Ministries and Islands especially my island of Aitutaki.

I accept the responsibilities for the trust of the people and therefore I want to be a good representative and I am really grateful to be here this week to learn, share and to be better informed to do my job well.

As an MP I am involved in the Meetings of the Island Council as the local Government on the yearly plan and the budget but with no voting rights. The Executive Officer gives quarterly reports to the Mayor, Councillors and MPs to track the use of the funds and the progress in reaching the goals of the projects.

Since my becoming an MP my local service delivery has been the following projects: little Market Huts for the families who are planters of water melons, capsicum, cucumber, tomatoes nu/drinking nuts, some producing

local products like coconut oil, weaving hand crafts, tie die pareu/sarong type of garments, cooked foods of chowmein using local products to sell to both locals and tourists on the side of the road. For many families, this is their only income apart from child benefit and old age pension. The funds that I have been able to provide this service is an allocation by the national government of \$10,000 to each MP for community projects to support the Community of each Constituency to improve their living conditions through their own efforts. The funding is released after a proposal is given to the Ministry of Finance who pays the providers of the goods directly and the funding is managed by that Ministry which is spread out through the year. The funds can also be used for large community functions and at Christmas celebrations and to buy food for the elderly and people living with disabilities but strictly no alcohol purchases.

I have bought material, printing boards and dye for women groups for their tie-dye projects of their items for sale which helps with daily living.

I have some photos of the huts I am talking about.

Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen, Thank you for your attention.

Kia Orana e Kia Manuia.