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Submission of the Draft Economic Development Strategy 10-12-2020

## **Objective 2. Transforming Our Economy**

Innovation Strategy - Brought forward as a priority for navigating a new economic environment Beginning 2021.

Recognising and re-defining key areas for development – working group

Questions that could be considered to achieve this:

- What are the resources that we have plentiful supply? How are these used? What else could they be used for?
- Where are our strengths in terms of people; their passions, skills and expertise?
- How do we protect our precious resources? - answering this question will define our areas for innovation - our environment, people and economy.

Understanding the world economy - trends in markets, how can we meet demand with what we have or can make? I understand that this might be in the area of task force, but given the world climate it might make sense to come from Government. Building a strategy that recognizes resources – our environment, people and economy we might be able to identify potential areas for innovation.

Ease barriers of export to New Zealand and Australia – if tax, shipping and production costs could be shared – just in the start up phase.

Protecting what we have is paramount – our people, our water, our land and ocean, any decisions need to respect and protect the health and wellbeing of what we value.

## **Objective 3. Developing our people and culture**

Agree attracting Cook Islands home is a concern, when considering any move for a family, at the top of their list is always economic stability, followed close by housing, health care, education and community.

Agree that a roadmap to increase uptake in participating in higher education in the Cook Islands is needed to meet industry requirements. I work in the industry and in my class this year, for fees free I have 21 students, under half of them are Cook Islanders. I would of like to see more CI participating but have witnessed barriers.

When I talk to locals about upskilling, they don't see the value in educating themselves to better their lives and the lives of their families, and yet they need the help. I would like to see advertising campaigns aimed at helping them understand how education can improve their lives.

For Example – mum and dad do a course at CITTI, at the beginning they are eating a loaf of bread and corned beef for dinner. Some time goes by and after the course they have a dinner table and on it for dinner are chops, salad, rice.... For example.

MENTAL HEALTH AND PRIMARY HEALTH – need urgent attention. Family violence is growing and our people need help. A place to go to be safe with your family, just as a village has a Puna, maybe a village can have a shared safe place.

Schools and Higher education do not have mental health support for its students. MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS

Culture is all about people and tradition passed down through people – we have our performing arts, but creative arts is just as important and not supported from the MOC – sculpture and all art forms. Art has a way of transforming the view of something and fostering art gives people an opportunity to participate in the community. Forming of new ideas and views is what art is, if you want to get an abstract view on something ask an artist.

Land Tenure system – a suggestion; that after 5 years living in the Cooks, a Cook Islander can apply for land from the family, if a said piece of land is not being used then they can secure it.

#### **Objective 5. Greening our Economy**

- Call for import tax on all plastic products, a plastic recovery tax – use this money to support innovation in the recycling and development of new technologies to prevent waste material from becoming part of our island and water. Why plastic? Why not other materials that don't create waste products?
- Building a waste disposal plant that would accept waste from all our islands. Green technologies – understand there is now an incinerator that generates such high heat that it burns up all waste, aside from toxic. So much so that now Sweden is running out of rubbish.
- Fostering appreciation and championing how things could be done differently is paramount. This could be done by calling for submissions on ideas on waste minimization and waste reduction.
- Banning harmful pesticides – there are plenty of available alternatives that a lot safer.

“This is how we've always done things” - this phrase assumes a dogmatic approach to life and how we live in the world today. What I suggest is a progressive intent of our Government - allow people who are passionate about moving our nation forward a opportunity to do so.

Ask for interested people from the community to work as a group with the aim of developing a strategy for each of your objectives – broken into smaller topics if necessary. A “Working Group” who given a task could have a month or two to identify and a outline of what is the next step. I understand that people are different and have their views – but with interview and guidelines in place maybe something interesting and tangible might come of it. If not nothing of note comes from this then the government has support a few families over the course of the working group.

Also – I would like to mention the following because they are important to me:

1. Religion has little place in todays Government – there is no place for exclusivity based on religion, sex or education. I know that the association between the two is blurred but Government needs to show that it is Inclusive of all Cook Islanders, not exclusive according to religion.
2. **ANIMAL RIGHTS** need to be addressed, currently there is none. As a nation how we care for those who have no voice, and are vulnerable, says a lot about who we are. Animal Welfare needs to be regulated.

As we move forward together facing constant uncertainty and change, this change leads to discomfort. Discomfort leads to growth and growth leads to raising above what we thought was insurmountable. All the while we are becoming resilient, redefining who we are as Cook Islanders creating a world in which we can flourish and focusing on all the possibilities and opportunities as we move forward.

Thank you for calling for submissions and for your time.

Kind regards

Grace Henry