



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION

TARAWA POST HANDBOOK

DECEMBER 2006

PREFACE |

The Tarawa post Handbook is designed to provide readers with answers to many questions that may arise during their postings to Kiribati. It compliments the Post Report and should be read in conjunction with it. Every attempt has been made to ensure that the information (including addresses and telephone numbers) given in this guide is correct, but as changes will occur from time to time readers should check if there is any doubt. The information here reflects purely the views of the writers but should not be taken as the official views or attitudes of the High Commission or the Australian Government.

The Office Manager is responsible for production of this Handbook and issue of amendments. It would be appreciated if after you have settled down, you could pass to the Office Manager any comments or suggestions you may have for additions or changes in the Handbook.

May you have an enjoyable and rewarding posting in Tarawa.

**AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION
TARAWA**

ADDRESS

BAIRIKI

TARAWA

Postal address

PO BOX 77

BAIRIKI

FROM WITHIN AUSTRALIA

TARAWA BAG

LOCKED BAG 40

KINGSTON ACT 2604

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

CHANCERY SWITCHBOARD 21184

BUSINESS HOURS

MONDAY to FRIDAY 08.00. – 16.30

Role Of The Australian High Commission

The Australian High Commission in Tarawa, like all Australian diplomatic missions, consists of staff from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and other Australian Government agencies. In Tarawa the only attached agency with representation is AusAID. AusAID has one unattached officer in the AusAID program office 400 metres from the mission. The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) duties are performed by LES. DIMA A-based are located in Suva, Fiji. There are 3 unattached officers of the Department of Defence working with the Defence Cooperation Program in Betio.

Purpose and Function of the High Commission

The purpose of the High Commission is to advance and pursue Australia's interests in Kiribati, and to provide appropriate assistance and protection to Australian citizens residing in or visiting Kiribati. Australia's interests in Kiribati, and these very much reciprocate Kiribati's interests in the relationship, cover political and economic relations, trade, development co-operation, culture and sport, immigration, defence, bilateral and regional issues. The structure of the High Commission reflects these interests.

Structure of the High Commission

Head of Mission

The High Commissioner is the Head of Mission and is in charge of the post. He or she represents the Australian Government as a whole. The High Commissioner is responsible to the Australian Government for ensuring that Australian Government objectives are met, and to the Kiribati Government for ensuring that the High Commission operates appropriately within Kiribati and does not act in breach of its status. The High Commissioner is the conduit through which communications between the Australian and Kiribati Governments are passed.

Although High Commissioners are most commonly drawn from staff of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, they do not during their tenure actually remain officers of the Department. They are appointed by the Executive Council of Australia, and, as noted represent the totality of Australian Government interests in the country of accreditation. (Ambassadors and High Commissioners have the same status, the difference being that Ambassadors exchanged between countries of the Commonwealth are known as High Commissioners).

In exercising their responsibility for Australia's interests in Kiribati, the High Commissioner is guided by a Directive issued by the Australian Prime Minister which lays down guidelines for the management of the Australian Government's representation overseas. This Directive details the High Commissioner's responsibility for the overall supervision and control of all staff of the mission.

Australia-based staff (A-based).

Staff appointed by Agencies in Australia to the High Commission are Australia-based staff, and are usually assigned for a period of three years, although postings may be shorter or longer according to a range of factors.

Locally Engaged Staff (LES)

In their work, Australia-based staff are provided essential and important support by staff engaged locally by the High Commission. These staff are usually, but not always, citizens of Kiribati, although it is open to the High Commission to engage any person it wishes who is residing legally in Kiribati.

Diplomatic And Consular Privileges

The Vienna Conventions on diplomatic and consular relations set out what are accepted as appropriate exemptions from duties and taxes. Each country sets its own regulations governing the exercise of diplomatic and consular privileges, and in particular the resale in that country of goods purchased free of duty under privilege. In Kiribati staff with a Diplomatic passport are entitled to diplomatic privileges those on an Official passport are not.

The Vienna Convention is given the force of law in Kiribati by the Kiribati Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities Act. The intention of the Convention is to provide diplomatic staff with the ability to undertake their work without interference by local authorities. Such interference is rare in countries such as Kiribati. Occasions can arise where it is crucially important for a diplomat to have protection of the Convention.

Contrary to popular belief, the Convention is not for the purpose of providing diplomats with duty free goods and the like. This is, in fact, a peripheral condition, although it is one frequently focused on. Nor is the Convention intended to allow diplomats to flout the law, especially when driving. Diplomats are expected to observe all the laws of the country in which they are posted, including traffic and parking laws.

Officers' Responsibilities

Admin Circular PO561 (attached) reminds all officers of their responsibilities and the requirements of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in relation to the privileges and immunities they enjoy as members of this Mission. On arrival at the post you are required to see the SAO/HOM to sign an undertaking in respect of Diplomatic and Consular Privileges.

Your first days in Tarawa

Airport

Bonriki international airport is at the Eastern end of Tarawa, some 22 kilometers from the capital Bairiki. Bonriki caters for all Kiribati international traffic, and is the arrival point in Kiribati for officers.

Our Airline (formerly Air Nauru) has a single aircraft which flies into Tarawa from Brisbane on Mondays and Thursdays. Air Pacific operates a flight to and from Nadi on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Departure Tax

An airport tax of \$20.00 for passengers departing from Kiribati on international flights is payable at check-in at Bonriki Airport. This is waived for officers on the Diplomatic List and their dependents when they travel on their diplomatic passports.

Meeting With Post Administration

Soon after arrival you should arrange to talk with the SAO and the Office Manager. Spouses or partners are of course welcome to attend these meetings.

Remember

- ◆ Read the new arrival checklist
- ◆ Forms mentioned on the checklist are available from the DFAT LES.
- ◆ Take the checklist and forms with you to the meeting.

Allow for an hour's discussion with the SAO and Office Manager about

- ◆ Bank account set-up
- ◆ Utilities set-up
- ◆ driver's licence set-up,
- ◆ private vehicle registration
- ◆ duty free privileges
- ◆ accommodation briefing
- ◆ school enrolment arrangements
- ◆ transport assistance for arrival
- ◆ arrival of personal effects
- ◆ settling in kit.
- ◆

Internal telephone directory

This represents an invaluable directory for officers and spouses. If one has not been supplied on arrival, ask for one from the Office Manager. The internal directory, while not a classified document, is one which should be closely guarded to ensure privacy of High Commission officers. Please destroy old copies and do not give out home numbers of officers without their express approval.

(A copy of the most recent directory is attached)

The Internal directory contains lists of staff of all agencies, their positions (e.g. Office Manager), work phone and private numbers, together with the names and addresses of all Defence Co-operation personnel.

Kiribati Language

English is the official language and is used and understood reasonably well in Tarawa. Naturally, the local populace also use their own language.

Pronunciation

Kiribati	English Equivalent
b	b
g	ng as in "thing"

Basic Expressions

hello	mauri
goodbye	tia boo
thank you	ko rabwa
thank you very much	ko bati n rabwa
yes	eang
no	tiaki
please	taiaoka
excuse me/ sorry	ko a matauninga/ kabwara au bure

Language Courses

Courses in the Kiribati language are sometimes held at the Tarawa technical Institute. Ring 26597 for details. Peace Corps also run courses when their new recruits arrive. The High Commission has some basic language lessons available (these are kept in Group/Common/Language training or ask the SAO or Office Manager to print them out for you.)

Kiribati Customs

The following is a very brief explanation of some of the local customs and some general rules to observe. Local observance can be stricter outside Tarawa but the simple rules are easy to learn and to apply.

The head

The head is the most sacred part of the body and **must never** be touched.

To attract a person's attention

In Western culture to attract attention or beg someone's pardon the password is 'excuse me, please'. In Kiribati it is 'taiaoka' or 'ko a matauninga'.

Excuse Me

There are a number of unwritten rules that all cultured I-Kiribati observe. Expatriates can be forgiven minor lapses, but the following rules of etiquette should be observed as a matter of course

- o Say "taiaoka" before reaching for something above someone, in walking behind or by someone sitting down, in touching someone.
- o Take off your shoes before entering a mwaneaba (or home).
- o Stoop when entering a mwaneaba.
- o Speak quietly.
- o Women should not wear shorts and try to keep knees covered (with a lavalava).
- o Sit cross-legged. Do not sit with the legs extended in front if you can help it, (though obviously you should sit so as not to cause yourself major discomfort).
- o Seats are generally provided for honoured guests in Tarawa but not on the outer islands.

Saying thank you

Saying thank you Ko rabwa

ACCOMMODATION

Residential Accommodation

When you first move into your residence, you may well be experiencing some 'post-arrival depression' or culture shock which tends to hit us all to a greater or lesser degree at some stage in the first month or two. This, coupled with the fact that you don't have your personal effects around you, may cause you to become unduly concerned with the state of the house. Small problems tend to become gross deficiencies during this time - later you will wonder why it all upset you so!

But that is not to say that you should accept anything which is broken or does not work.

Quality of Housing

Housing in Tarawa in general is mostly of a basic standard, although houses owned by the High Commission are at the better end of the range available in Tarawa, but in most cases you should not expect a quality or standard equivalent to homes in Canberra.

Inventory of Government property

When you move into your residence, with the Office Manager, you will be required to check and sign the inventory of government items in the house.

Agreement to care for property

You will also be required to sign an undertaking to observe certain requirements of tenancy. Damage beyond fair wear and tear (e.g. damage caused by animals kept inside) is the responsibility of tenants. All officers are expected to ensure that furniture is maintained in the best possible condition.

Property inspections

Handover/takeover inspections will be carried out upon arrival/ departure from Post.

From time to time other inspections are made by the Office Manager, Facilities Manager UPS (resident in Australia), and Handyman to check on work being carried out and work requested.

Emergency Maintenance

Contact the Public Utilities Board (PUB) for dangerous power situations or for water problems. Contact details are on the Post's official Contact list.

Maintenance schedule

There is a cyclical maintenance plan for all residences owned by the Australian Government that ensures these houses are kept in reasonable condition.

The Post does attempt to get scheduled inconvenient work, such as painting, refurbishment, etc, done during hand over periods or periods of leave away from post.

Early each year your assistance will be requested to identify repair and maintenance requirements for preparation for discussions with UPS.

As-required maintenance

Request maintenance from the Office Manager

The Office Manager will organise either the High Commission handyman or a local firm to attend.

You will be contacted to arrange a suitable time for work to be carried out.

High Commission Handyman

The High Commission has a locally-engaged handyman who provides a good standard of workmanship, however he is unable to attend to all needs. You should organize work through the office Manager.

Cautions about local firms

You should realise that the general standards of workmanship differ from Australian standards and that work often takes much longer than would be expected.

Where possible, it is advisable to closely supervise workers from local firms. If you intend for your house staff to supervise experience has shown that you should check that they understand what you mean by "supervise". House staff are not expected to "sign off" on work.

Cleaning up at the end of the job may not be satisfactory unless you supervise the process. Refer to Office Manager if you are not happy with the end result.

Mildew and mould

These are common problems. Efforts to avoid them include

- ◆ washing bathroom walls with a bleach solution,
- ◆ airing cupboards regularly,
- ◆ using your air conditioners effectively,
- ◆ checking framed pictures for signs of mould under the glass or on the back,
- ◆ polishing leather goods frequently,
- ◆ Leaving ceiling fans on to keep air moving.

Household Details

Cooking gas and Drinking water

Gas is provided by the High Commission. Have household staff check bottle levels and please let the Office Manager know when you need refills.

In an emergency you can also call Kiri Gas ph. 21090 and order what you need. The invoice provided on delivery should be sent to the Accounts Clerk for payment.

Supplies of drinking water in the units provided in each house should be checked regularly by you or your household staff regularly and the Office Manager advised of any stocks needed. Restocking is done by the handyman. Urgent additional requirements can be addressed to the Office Manager.

Cockroaches and ants

These can be a real problem.

If you have a particular vermin or insect problem advise the Office Manager so that special arrangements can be made. Cockroach baits and insect sprays are usually available at local stores.

Light bulbs

These have a short life here and under the tenancy agreement, it is the responsibility of the tenant to replace them. Garden lights are an exception and are replaced by the Mission.

Garden Lights

Apply to the Office Manager for these.

Household light bulbs

Supplying these is the responsibility of the officer however, if any are broken when you move in you should report this.

Living Conditions

Arrival

Hotel Accommodation

Some new arrivals spend their first night in Tarawa at the Mary's Motel. This is the closest hotel to the High Commission.

The duration of stay depends on a number of factors including the readiness of your house for occupation, but is generally limited to three days.

Settling-In/Out Kits

Kits are available from the High Commission and are meant to assist you to operate your household (admittedly at a minimum level of requirement) until your own goods arrive.

If you find they do not contain certain items or have insufficient numbers of items, contact the Office Manager. These kits are also made available on departure so that your personal effects can be packed before you leave.

Delivery Of Personal Effects

After unpacking, you should contact the Office Manager to arrange for collection of the empty boxes.

- ◆ Personal effects are usually sent by air freight. The length of time it takes for you personal effects will vary depending upon available cargo space in the plane and the size of your consignment.
- ◆ Sea freight may take up to eight weeks from Australia. Once effects have arrived it usually takes another 3-5 days for Customs clearance and paperwork formalities.
- ◆ The Office Manager will advise you when your effects are custom cleared and will arrange delivery to your residence.

Uplift Policy may vary between departments but DFAT's is attached.

Banking

There one commercial bank in Kiribati - the Bank of Kiribati, Bairiki, ph. 21095. It also has branches at Bikenibeu and Betio. ATMs are located at the Betio and the Bairiki branches and also at the Otintaai Hotel.

Official Account

The High Commission's official account is held with the Bank of Kiribati, Bairiki Branch.

Opening Accounts

It is advisable to open an account as soon as you arrive to facilitate salary payments, cash advances and cheque book issue. Banking Forms are attached.

Loans

Rates are usually comparable to Australia, though interest may be higher. Many officers take an inexpensive overdraft facility to cover over-drawings on their cheque accounts, since the penalty on unauthorized ventures into the red is considerable - \$50 each time.

Banking hours

Downtown banking can be hectic around lunchtime and on Kiribati Government paydays (every second Friday – Australian Government off-pay week) and on the 21 st of each month when queues are long. The normal banking hours are

Monday - Friday 0900 - 1500

Currency And Foreign Exchange

Kiribati operates on the Australian dollar. There are some Kiribati commemorative coins about.

Credit Cards

MasterCard and Visa cards have very limited use on Tarawa but most Australian cards can be used in the bank's ATMs.

High Commission staff can use cheques drawn on local bank accounts. These are widely accepted in local restaurants and shops.

Child care

Australian-style short term childcare is not used by High Commission families as house staff usually care for the children during the day, when necessary. The cost for child care during the day is not normally an "extra" but is included as part of normal duties for domestic staff.

Most families pay the normal house staff a separate and additional amount for babysitting "after hours".

All such arrangements are decided between the family and the house staff.

Churches

There are many churches in Tarawa. Some churches have services in English. Check with churches listed above on arrival for current situation.

For details of English-speaking services and other activities, you should contact the appropriate office of the Church, as these details can change from time to time.

The following major religious groups are represented in Tarawa

Assemblies of God of Kiribati	28422
Baha'i Faith	28074
Church of God Kiribati	28848
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints	28075
Jehovah's Witnesses of Kiribati	21410
Kiribati Protestant Church	21195
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Tarawa	21279
Seventh Day Adventist Church	21303

Cinemas and Videos and DVDs

A 98 seat cinema (air conditioned) opened in Betio in 2000 and shows a good range of current DVD movies at \$3 per head.

There are several video and DVD hire shops in Tarawa, although the quality of tapes is often very poor. Most stores seem to get their stock from the same suppliers in Fiji or the Marshall Islands and these are of varying quality.

The Tarawa climate is very hard on videos and players/recorders. The high humidity means that tapes and players benefit from being kept in air conditioning, but this rarely happens. Mould forms quickly on videotapes (especially rental ones which are not looked after) and the mould transfers to the recording and playback heads on the VCRs, producing "snow" and degradation to complete loss of picture and sound.

Clothing (Men)

Men would never wear a suit or a tie to work in Tarawa, however, a tie is worn when visiting the House of Assembly during sittings, when visiting the President in his/her Office or to some events where the President is attending. Long trousers are the norm for normal work days. All clothing should be brought from Australia.

Clothing (Women)

Women normally wear what they would wear to work during summer in Australia, but stockings/pantyhose are rarely worn. All clothing should be brought from Australia.

Clothing (Children)

Children's clothing should also be brought from Australia. Clothing requirements for young children do not go much beyond shorts and T-shirts. School uniforms can be obtained locally.

Clubs

The Ambo club is the only club in Tarawa with it's own club facilities.

Hash House Harriers	Conducts runs through different Tarawa locations each Wednesday at 6.00 pm followed by drinks.
Happy Hour	First Friday of every month at AHC.
Betio Game Fishing Club	Monthly weigh in of fish caught in the competition. Held at the Captain's Bar, Betio

Household Help

House Help

It is common practice in Tarawa to employ domestic assistance.

Salaries

Salaries actually paid can vary from \$30 - 70 per week, depending upon family composition, hours worked, whether the staff are living-in or out, fulltime or part-time and whether or not food is provided. There are currently no local labour laws covering the employment of domestic staff. It is probably best to confer with your colleagues to find out what they regard as fair salary and conditions.

Employment Arrangements

When someone new, most people find it a good idea to do so for a trial period - say for a month, but this should be clearly explained to the employee from the start, to avoid problems if the arrangement fails to work out and termination becomes necessary.

Duties

Normal duties undertaken by domestic assistants are general house cleaning, washing, ironing, making beds, washing dishes and assistance with the children, including bathing, etc. All arrangements depend on mutual agreement - some also cook and do the shopping. When employing house staff, you should discuss the full terms of employment and your expectations with them so they are understood by all concerned.

Salary

Rates of pay are negotiable, but a good indication is the rate of reimbursement paid by the High Commission. Reimbursement of salary is claimed by submitting receipts, signed by the employee, to the Admin Section. (A sample reimbursement claim form is attached.). HOM domestic staff are administered separately.

Babysitting after hours

After hours babysitting is usually extra, at about \$2.20 per hour, but this matter should be negotiated in the general terms of employment.

Evening Work

You should also negotiate the basis of employment at evening functions i.e. whether extra is to be paid for assisting at dinners, or if that is included in normal duties.

Christmas Bonus

Some officers pay household staff and gardeners a week's wages as a Christmas bonus. This can be claimed back out of your budget for HMA.

Gardening

The practices observed for domestic assistance should also be observed when employing gardeners.

Cooks/Staff Handling Food

The Family Liaison Officer has suggested the following websites may be useful for assisting staff to understand the importance of food hygiene.

www.foodsafetymatters.gov.au (from home page select student guide from left hand side of screen);

www.foodstandards.gov.au (from home page select The Code>Food Safety Standards (Australia only)>Safefood Australia> A Guide to the Food Safety Standards)

www.foodlink.org.uk

Education

The designated schools for children of High Commission staff in Tarawa are

Preschools

St Anne's Pre-School
Bairiki
Tarawa

Primary

Rurubao School
Bairiki

The High Commission strongly recommends against using local schooling for children of any age. English language is rarely used in schools and education standards are exceedingly poor. Distance learning arrangements are sometimes used by expatriate families, but often prove unsatisfactory due to the lack of available local support with learning arrangements and due to the lack of social interaction opportunities with other children their own age. Local schools including designated schools are not adequately maintained. Sanitary facilities are unreliable and often unavailable. Many children in Tarawa are required to beach toilet.

Employment/Education for Spouses

Courses

USP offers extension courses. Tarawa Technical Institute also runs courses. Check newspapers and yellow pages for other courses.

Food

Supplies are erratic and word of their arrival on Tarawa spreads quickly. The main stores are One Stop and MOEL. Other smaller supplies are Vanuatu meats, Itomans, Fern and BKL which can surprise. You will be shown all these soon after your arrival.

Fish are sold along the roadside and at the market on Betio. A supply of frozen fish and lobster is available at the Central Pacific Producers (CPP) on the wharf in Betio. Please carefully consider all aspects of hygiene before buying.

Supplies of fresh food and vegetables are erratic and word of their arrival on Tarawa spreads quickly. The main stores are One Stop and MOEL. Other smaller supplies are Vanuatu meats, Itomans, Fern and BKL which can surprise. You will be shown all these soon after your arrival.

Media

Newspapers

There are three weekly newspapers in Kiribati, *Te Uekera*, and the *Newstar* with articles in Kiribati and some in English, available from shops and costing \$1. The other newspaper is the *Te Mauri* but it is not as widely read.

Regional current affairs magazines

The regionally-oriented "Island Business" is published in Fiji. The office purchases a copy for internal distribution.

Australian Papers

The Australian and a selection of magazines is provided by the High Commission to keep staff abreast of current events in Australia. You will be included on the distribution list for these journals.

Radio

Radio Australia

Relayed 24 hours a day from the High Commission's satellite receiver on 96 FM. (currently out of service).

Satellite TV

The dish situated in the High Commission grounds is tuned to receive Australia Network and Radio Australia. This can be accessed by televisions connected to aerial outlets in the Chancery, the Recreation Centre and the residences.

All houses now have satellite TV via Fiji TV. Program details can be obtained from their website www.fijitv.com.fj. It is the Sky pacific package. Refer any problems with reception etc to Office Manager

Personal Security

In the ordinary course of events officers may be reasonably assured of their safety in Tarawa, and in Kiribati in general. The risk of politically motivated violence and of civil disorder is low. There is, however, a risk of burglary, mostly of cash, food or items that can be readily converted to cash, such as water pumps. Cars should be locked when not in use to prevent petty theft from them.

In summary, Tarawa is a relatively safe place in which members of the Mission only need to exercise sensible security precautions. Treat personal security with appropriate commonsense, read your instructions carefully and communicate any problems or unease to the Post Security Officer.

Calling the Police

Police response times and efficiency generally are very variable, and never up to Australian standards. Refer to the Official Phone list for telephone numbers.

Locking The House

It is strongly recommended that grille doors be kept locked when the main doors are open. There have been cases of persons entering unoccupied parts of the house unnoticed and stealing. Do not leave valuables in sight or in reach.

Break-Ins

In the event of a break-in or other incident at your house, call the police and stay in the safe haven or main bedroom with your mobile phone.

Reporting incidents

Please remember to bring any incidents to the attention of the Post Security Officer. In that way we are able to monitor the situation, report incidents to Canberra and be proactive in our security measures. Officers and their families personal safety is first priority. Discuss any concerns you may have on security matters with the High Commissioner / Post Security Officer.

Recreation

At weekends people tend to find things to do in Tarawa that fit their interests.

Some suggestions are

- ◆ visiting the High Commission pool or tennis court,
- ◆ going to the movies in Betio,
- ◆ boating to North Tarawa or the lagoon in AHC boat
- ◆ visit the Cultural centre in Bikenibeu (phone 28283)

Nightclubs And Bars

There are a number of nightclubs/ bars in Tarawa. Talk to staff to find the most popular ones and safest venues.

(High Commission recreation boat rules and roster are attached)

Out Of Tarawa

There are a few places where you can get away from the capital. Talking to colleagues and locals is probably the best way of discovering the kind of place that might suit you.

The following resources provide patchy information about Kiribati

Kiribati Visitors Bureau

Located next door to the post office in Betio the visitors centre has a limited number of brochures and post cards available. As does the Otintaai.

Books

If you are an avid reader it will probably be necessary to have books sent from Australia to order through the Internet. There is a Public library in Bairiki which charges a small fee which you may be interested in joining. Talk to work mates and friends who may be interested in sharing books with you.

Whilst not exhaustive here are some website some staff have been using:

www.qbdthebookstore.com – Queensland Book depot

www.shearersbookshop.com.au _Shearers bookstore

www.readersfeast.com.au – Reader' Feast bookstore

www.shop.abc.net.au – ABC shop

Most bookstores in Australia have website.

Short of a present for someone's birthday Perhaps a gift voucher that can be used on line.

Restaurants

High Commission staff patronise the few restaurants in Tarawa. These include the Aboy's Restaurant, Ocean Restaurant, Mary's Motel, the Red House and the Captain's Bar.

No places are notoriously dangerous, however opinions vary about the safety of eating in small cafes. A busy cafe may be a good indication that the food is freshly cooked.

One acquires local immunity to general bugs after time, but care should be exercised eating out.

Services

Electricity

Normal Australian-style 3-pin plugs are used throughout Tarawa. The voltage is nominally 240V, 50 cycle, though there can be wide variation from the norm.

The electricity supply in Tarawa can be unreliable and interruptions to supply are sometimes frequent. They can interrupt computer work, and involve constant resetting of internal time-keepers, which is annoying, but not critical. All residences are equipped with emergency generators.

There have been incidences of voltage fluctuations outside the permitted norms. It would be prudent to bring (or buy here) some form of overload protection, especially for home computers and modems where a consistent supply might be critical.

All delicate electronic equipment falls prey to the dust and humidity in Tarawa and sometimes to ants, during periods of extended rain, mould grows everywhere, damaging cassettes, videotapes, and computer hard-drives. It is very difficult to protect against the extreme humidity, and very valuable equipment would be best left in storage in Australia unless you are prepared for regular cleaning and servicing.

VCRs for example need regular cleaning of recording and playback heads - sometimes as often as weekly.

Telephones

The Tarawa telephone system has breakdowns usually as a result of wet weather. Each residence has a telephone and an extension to the Chancery PABX. Please report any faults to the Visa Clerk/Receptionist and/or the Office Manager.

Local calls

Cost 15 cents for each call. (Landline to Landline) Calls to mobiles are timed and generally more expensive.

Outside Tarawa

Calls to outside Tarawa are also timed. "Area codes" are not used. Please see the phone directory or ask for further details.

ISD

Your phone has the ISD facility. To place a call through the operator dial 103. Accounts show number called and length of call for international calls.

To call Australia dial 00 61 and then the area code (omitting the Australian "0", so that - for example - Canberra is 00 61 2 62.... etc.

The PABX extension in the house can also be used to phone Australia at a much cheaper rate. Dial 88616 0 followed by the number in Australia including area code.

Accounts

Are mailed to you at the High Commission monthly. Pay direct to TSKL at the Telecom office next to the clinic at Bairiki square. It is a good idea to keep all your receipts as disputes can arise.

Reimbursement

The High Commission reimburses A-based staff members the cost of one telephone rental and 20 local calls a month. Refer to Office Manager for assistance with reimbursement.

Phone calls from the High Commission

You will be required, of course, to pay for any personal calls made from an official phone. There is an extension to the Chancery PABX in your house which has access to the VoiceNet system.

Kiribati Telephone Directory

Updated annually but never up to date and a copy is available from the Office Manager.

Postal Services And Charges

Bairiki Post Office Bairiki Square.
Betio Post Office
Bikenibeu Post Office

Opening hours.

Monday – Friday 9 a.m. to 3.00pm

Reliability Air mail delivery is fairly reliable. Average time for delivery to and from Australia is 5 to 21 days.

Cost to Australia Aerogramme 60c.
Postcard 30c Post Card in envelope 60c..
Airmail letter 60c per 15g.

Local mail - 26c

Incoming mail

Officers are advised to have their personal mail sent to a post office box (the High Commission address, PO Box 77, Bairiki may be used). There is no postal delivery.

Philatelic Bureau

is on Betio next to the post office

Opening hours are Monday - Friday 8am – 12.30, 13.30 – 16.00

Sales of stamps and first day covers can be made over the counter.

Transport

Public

Buses

There is a fleet of 13 seater, privately owned, mini-buses which provide transport on Tarawa and are identified by a paper sign with 'BUS' written on it in the front window. They run from about 630 a.m. to 830 p.m. daily between Betio (the port) and Temwaiku (the Hospital). Fares range between \$0.55 and \$1.40. There are very few formal bus stops but these are disregarded. There are no time tables and often there will be several buses competing with each other for passengers. To stop a passing bus raise your hand. Once on board, be prepared for very loud music and cramped conditions and be ready to get off and back on the bus to make way for other passengers alighting. To stop the bus, call out 'Tiaaoka ikai!'. (Please here) Pay as you get off.

Official

Hire of High Commission Official Vehicles

PO134 sets out the policy on Private Hire of official vehicles at post.

The rate is adjusted annually.

Official transport is not provided for travel to and from work.

Seatbelts must be worn by all occupants of official motor vehicles.

Smoking in official vehicles is not permitted.

Any **driving infringements** incurred (i.e. parking ticket, speeding, etc) are a matter for the officer to settle. No diplomatic immunity applies.

Spouses

Unfortunately Australian Government policy prevents spouses from driving official vehicles (the question of liability for non-Commonwealth employees becomes an issue).

Private

Officers may bring new or used vehicles from Australia or consider either the purchase of a new or second hand imported duty free car, or a secondhand diplomatic vehicle from one of the other missions in Tarawa.

Of course, car purchasing is a subjective judgment. Officers may consider purchasing a new car on arrival to be sold at the end of the posting, though the prospect of a

significant loss on sale must be kept in mind since no-one can predict the Kiribati duty position when the time comes to sell. The purchasing power of the average I-Kiribati is not great.

Others have imported new and used cars from Australia (though shipping is not cheap – about \$2,500) as this retains for them the option of re-exporting at the end of posting should sale here not prove attractive.

Second-hand options exist in Tarawa, especially within the expatriate community and even the High Commission, and lessen the potential loss on sale, such decisions are highly personal and influenced by all sorts of subjective factors. Second hand cars can be purchased from dealers such as www.japanesevehicles.com.

Air conditioning

Highly recommended, not only for the cooling effect, needed all year round, but also for the dehumidification and filtering of the pollution from Tarawa traffic.

New car dealers

Talk to your colleagues, shop around the numerous agents, and take a bit of time to make a decision whilst you settle in.

- ◆ Toyota Tarawa Motors 21090
- ◆ Most vehicles sold in Tarawa are Japanese made and are imported direct from Japan, and are not normally compliant with Australian standards.

Second hand vehicles

There are a few reputable dealers in Tarawa in secondhand vehicles, some of whom import used cars from Japan, which are inexpensive. Talk to colleagues for advice.

Use of CD plates

The MFA requires the strict observance of the protocols involved with CD plated motor vehicles. When you sell your vehicle to someone who does not have entitlement to diplomatic privileges, the onus is on you, the seller, to ensure the removal of the CD plates, before handing the car over to the new owner. This also applies when agencies sell official vehicles. It is your responsibility to ensure any duty payable is paid to Customs.

Maintenance

Rust

Care needs to be taken if purchasing a second-hand vehicle to ensure it is rust free.

Rust is an endemic problem in Kiribati with the high humidity and sea air, requiring all cars to be rust-proofed when new. Garage at home where possible.

Wear and tear

Wear and tear on vehicles is heavy, with tyres and suspensions taking particular punishment from the state of the roads. Maintenance in Tarawa is not always satisfactory and needs to be watched carefully. Costs can be high and one should enquire about best options when the car is due for service.

Insurance/Licences

Comprehensive insurance in Kiribati is expensive, and for good reason - there are a large number of claims caused by bad driving and incidental damage.

There is only one insurer in Kiribati, Kiribati Insurance Cooperation, Your "no-claim" record from past insurers can reduce premiums. Similarly, taking less than the "deluxe" insurance packages offered automatically to diplomats can produce considerable savings. Restricting the nominated drivers to older than 25, carefully adjusting the nominated value of the car on renewal of insurance etc all help to reduce the premiums to closer to Australian levels. But be careful not to underinsure as many people need to make a claim during their posting.

- Kiribati Insurance Corp (Ph.25 336)

Level of cover

We have been advised by the MFA that were you to have your vehicle written off, the full amount of duty would be payable. It is therefore in your interests to insure the vehicle for the full duty paid value.

Third party cover

Be sure not to neglect your third party cover, particularly if buying a secondhand car - it may not be current. You can arrange this with the insurance company.

Registration

Registration fees

Accredited Diplomats - no charge

Others -

vehicles below 1000cc = \$30.00

Renewal reminders for Third Party and Registration are not sent, so you should record when these are due for renewal.

Driver's License

To be issued with a Kiribati License, give your Australian driver's license to the Office Manager who will organise the issue of your Kiribati drivers licence.

Cost

- o \$10 for non-privileged staff and \$3 annual renewal fee.
- o Free for Diplomatic staff.

Driving In Kiribati

Australians would agree that standards of driver education are not high.

The basic rules are

- ◆ drive on the left,
- ◆ give way to your right unless those on your right face a stop sign or a give way sign (though stop signs are almost never observed),
- ◆ seat belt wearing is compulsory in Australian Government vehicles,
- ◆ the Speed Limit is 40 kph in villages and 60 kph outside the village and on the causeways. At times this is enforced through the use of radar.

Driving Advice

Be aware that

- ◆ roads in Kiribati are generally in poor condition,
- ◆ potholes force drivers to swerve all over the road,
- ◆ drivers often pass even when there is oncoming traffic (regardless of double lines) and expect that the oncoming traffic will move over to make room,
- ◆ pigs, dogs and small children can appear very suddenly in front of your moving vehicle,
- ◆ be careful assuming right of way.

On the road

- ◆ speeding and unsafe overtaking is prevalent.
- ◆ villagers (not unreasonably) ask that drivers slow their pace through villages, and The Ministry of Public Works and Utilities maintains speed bumps to ensure this.
- ◆ people walk along the sides of the road, both day and night and are particularly hard to see at night as there are very few street lights in heavily populated areas.
- ◆ buses, trucks and cars tend to stop, without warning, on the roadway to pick up or put down passengers rather than moving off the road.

Fuel

Petrol/Diesel

Cost

Benzine (Kiribati version of unleaded petrol) currently costs approximately \$1.20 per litre, diesel \$1.26 cents a litre, a percentage of which represents Kiribati Government duty.

Rebate

Officers with diplomatic privileges are entitled to a rebate of the duty component of their petrol/diesel purchases. To obtain the rebate you must obtain a receipt each time you buy fuel that shows clearly your car registration number, the date, how many litres you bought, the cost per litre, the total cost of fuel and the type of fuel ie "benzine".

Once a quarter, these receipts should be submitted through Admin who will lodge a reimbursement claim with the Comptroller of Customs. A rebate will deposited into your nominated bank account.

Miscellaneous

Business Cards and invitations

Printing of business cards can be arranged through the Office Manager. You should provide a draft of your requirements for printing. Business cards are generally an official expense.

Invitations are arranged through the Finance and Administration Officer.

Passports/Visas

It is your responsibility to ensure that your passport and visa remain current. Failure to do so may result in difficulties and embarrassment.

The usual arrangement on first entry is for a visa of one month to be stamped in your passport. The SAO will arrange for an extension of your visa for the duration of your posting.

New Passports can be arranged through the Finance and Administration Officer.

Diplomatic Bags

Unclassified Bags

Despatch Day

Currently airfreight bags are despatched to Canberra fortnightly on Tuesday. Closing time is 14.00 p.m. Monday at the Chancery.

Incoming Bags

A bag is despatched from Canberra to Tarawa weekly, closing in Canberra on Monday at 1600 and arriving at the Chancery in Tarawa on Thursday afternoon.

Personal Mail

See Attachment for details of using the diplomatic bag for personal mail, which must have the appropriate Australian postage stamps attached.

Safe hand bag

A courier run to Fiji is carried out once every three months by the A-based officers.

Pets

Vets

Do not have private practice in Tarawa, but are contacted through the Agricultural Division of the Ministry of Natural Resources. Ask the Receptionist to assist.

High Commission Recreation Centre

Contained within the High Commission grounds is a Recreation Centre for use of High Commission staff, consisting of a bar, swimming pool and tennis court. Instructions for the operation and use of the Recreation Centre are attached.

Representation Returns (DFAT Only)

Funds for representational purposes are advanced each quarter for HOM and six monthly for non SES. Acquittals must be submitted within 14 days of the completion of each quarter and before a further advance is provided. Administration Circular PO197 details the rules regarding the use of representation funds. (attached)

Salary Arrangements

Prior to each payday the High Commission receives from the parent department in Canberra a cable advising the amounts of salary payable to each officer.

These amounts are paid into an account at the Bank of Kiribati designated by the officer.

Problems

If you have any problems with your salary payments, speak to the SAO. Don't forget to read your pay slips carefully when they arrive (usually the week before payday), via email from Peoplesoft.

Special Events

Independence Celebrations last for a week in July when Tarawa "closes down". AHC diplomats are generally invited to the Stadium for the midweek ceremony (men should wear ties) and to State House for the celebratory dinner.

! CAUTION !
Overseas allowance payments can vary during a posting.
Do not overextend yourself financially.

----TARAWA----

May 2014

NOTE:

Post Reports are prepared and distributed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, to provide everyday information about living conditions at its overseas posts. Any opinions and interpretations expressed herein should not necessarily be regarded as the official view of the Australian Government.

Conditions/allowances set out in this post report apply to DFAT staff. Staff from other agencies may have differing conditions/allowances, and should seek information from their employing agency on applicable conditions.

The information below may influence your decision to apply for a posting to Tarawa:

- The standard of health care in Kiribati is very low. Tarawa may not be suitable for officers who have concerns about their health.
- Tarawa is remote and travel to outer islands or other Pacific countries can be difficult to coordinate and expensive. Officers should consider how the remoteness and isolation will affect them.
- There are very few options beyond home entertaining and outdoor pursuits for recreation. Officers should consider this limitation.
- There is little for non-working spouses to do during the day. Officers should consider the impact on their accompanying spouse.
- Tarawa is hot all year round, with intense sun and clear skies much of the time and very little night time drop in temperature. Officers should consider whether the climate is suitable.
- The High Commission in Tarawa is small. Officers are required to cover a range of post activities and will have little support. Officers should consider whether this type of working environment is suitable.
- There are constant frustrations in dealing with the challenges of day-to-day living in Tarawa. Telecommunications, power, water, fuel and food supplies are unreliable and due to the climate and dusty conditions, equipment often breaks down. Tarawa may not be suitable for officers who prefer a structured environment.

****IMPORTANT****

In 2007, following advice from post and in consultation with the Departmental Medical Adviser, Tarawa has been placed on the list of posts where the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will not send dependent children. Life on Tarawa could pose particular problems for A-based staff with children as infrastructure (including education facilities) is poor and medical support extremely limited.

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Section I - Introduction

Country Overview

Geography

The Republic of Kiribati consists of three main island groups: Gilberts (17 islands); Line (8 islands); and Phoenix (8 islands). The islands, which are spread across 3.5 million square kilometres of ocean straddling the equator in the Central Pacific, are mainly low-lying coral atolls that are no more than three metres above sea level. The exception is Banaba (Ocean) Island, which is an up thrust coral formation that rises to a height of 81m. The land mass of the three groups totals 717.1 square km and is characterised by limited vegetation of mainly coconut palms, pandanus and breadfruit trees.

Kiritimati (Christmas) Island, in the Line Group, is the largest coral atoll in the world (323.7 square kms).

The seat of government is located on Tarawa, the main atoll of the Gilberts Group, which is approximately 1,800 km north of Suva and just north of the equator.

History

The I-Kiribati are defined as Micronesian; but the original inhabitants are believed to have been Melanesian that were followed by migrants from South East Asia, Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. Inter-marriage has led to a population that is now essentially homogenous in appearance, language and traditions.

The first European encounter with the Gilberts Group was by the Spanish explorer Pedro Fernandez de Quiros in 1606. In 1765, Commodore John Byron explored the area and discovered Nikunau in the Southern Gilberts. On 24 December 1777, Captain James Cook sailed into the Kiritimati Island Lagoon and named the atoll Christmas Island. In 1788, Captain Thomas Gilbert and Captain John Marshall discovered more islands in the group while sailing between Port Jackson and China. By the 1820s, all of the islands in the group had been charted.

British and American whaling vessels were regular visitors to the area and in the third quarter of the 19th century, "blackbirders" raided the islands for labourers for plantations in Peru, Fiji, Australia, Hawaii and Tahiti. With the people's consent, the Gilbert Islands and the Ellice group (now Tuvalu) became a British protectorate in 1892 in an attempt to eliminate the slave trade and to contain tribal warfare. With the discovery of phosphate on Ocean Island in 1900, British interest in the area increased and more islands were placed under British protectorate.

In 1941, the islands were seized by Japan. On 21 November 1943, American forces launched an attack on the Tarawa islet of Betio initiating what would become one of the bloodiest battles in the Pacific. Tarawa's fall to the Allies would provide a major turning point in the war.

In 1979, independence from the United Kingdom was attained under the new name of Kiribati - a new republic had joined the Commonwealth.

Government and Administration

The Presidency and Cabinet

The President is the Head of State and also the Head of Government (and is responsible for the portfolio of Foreign Affairs and Immigration). The elected members of the Parliament nominate three or four members to stand in the national presidential election. The successful candidate, chosen by popular vote, can serve a maximum of three four-year terms.

The Hon Ieremia Tabai, GCMG, who was Chief Minister at Independence in 1979, became the first President of Kiribati and retained this position for three consecutive terms. Tabai was constitutionally obliged to stand down at the 1991 elections and his successor was his former Vice President, the Hon Teatao Teannaki.

The Teannaki Government collapsed on 24 May 1994 following a vote of no confidence. A Council of State comprising the Chairman of the Public Service Commission, the Speaker of Parliament and the Chief Justice performed the functions of government on a caretaker basis until The Hon Teburoro Tito was elected President on 30 September 1994. Tito was re-elected as President in November 1998 and February 2003. His third and final term was cut short when Parliament was dissolved on 27 March 2003 following a vote of

no confidence. Presidential elections were held in July 2003 and the Hon Anote Tong was elected President. President Tong was re-elected in October 2007 and again in January 2012.

The President appoints the Cabinet. The Cabinet is comprised of the President, the Vice President, the Attorney General and no more than ten ministers selected from the members of Parliament. The Cabinet exercises executive powers.

Parliament

The unicameral Parliament is known as the Maneaba ni Maungatabu. It is comprised of 46 members, 44 of whom are elected by universal adult suffrage for a four year term. The next election is scheduled for 2015. One seat is nominated by the Rabi Island Council in Fiji to represent the former inhabitants of the island of Banaba (Ocean Island). The Attorney General is also an unelected ex-officio member. The Speaker, not a member of parliament, is chosen by parliamentarians from nominations by the major political groupings and has neither an original nor a casting vote in parliamentary decisions. In addition to the ruling party, Boutokaan te Koaua (BTKP, Pillars of Truth), Maneaba te Mauri (MMP) and two more recently formed Maurin Kiribati (MKP) and Tabomoa (TP) comprise the four main political parties in Kiribati. These parties are more correctly defined as loose groupings as it is not unusual for members to change allegiance during their parliamentary tenure. Several sitting members describe themselves as independents and it is common for members to vote according to the special interests of their electorate on certain issues.

Local Government

Local government functions are performed by Island Councils which have wide powers over the internal affairs of their islands and are advised by the traditional village elders known as the Unimane (old men). Since 2008, council members are elected for four year terms, with the next election due in 2016. Island Council affairs come under the Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs.

Economy

Kiribati's economy faces particular challenges as a developing small island state. Around 80% of the population have no formal employment and rely on support from employed family members and subsistence agriculture and fishing. This low level of formal economic activity is reflective of the constraints on the country's development: a restricted resource base; remoteness and the distances from potential markets; the poor soil quality; salinity and lack of potable water; the scarcity of skilled labour; and the high cost of providing infrastructure to scattered islands. Domestic and international transportation also remains problematic, further constraining both external and inter-island trade and tourism.

Kiribati relies heavily on external sources for revenue. World Bank data shows that development assistance grants totalling USD 62.47 million and USD 63.06 million were received by Kiribati in 2011 and 2012 respectively. Major donors included Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the European Union (EU), Taiwan, the United Nations, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Other sources of income for Kiribati include: licensing of foreign fishing fleets from South Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan, the EU and the United States; worker remittances from I-Kiribati seaman abroad (mainly German and Norwegian ships); earnings from the Revenue Equalisation Reserve Fund (RERF); and a small and slowly growing tourism sector. The main commercial activity is the production of coconuts for export as copra. As copra is subsidised this production effort is a net cost to the government, not a revenue earner. Other exports include seaweed products, beche de mer, aquarium fish, clams and shark fins. Kiribati's principal trading partners are Australia and Japan. The majority of imports are sourced from Australia.

The World Bank estimates the Kiribati GDP in 2012 as USD175 million. Kiribati's per capita GDP is less than USD 1,000, making it one of the poorest countries in the world.

Population

The last census in 2011 recorded Kiribati's population as 103,058. The Tarawa atoll and accounts for around 44% of the population and is the most densely populated area in Kiribati. Approximately 30% of the population are under 15 years of age and the average life expectancy is 67.

Language

The official languages are I-Kiribati and English. Most government officials and university educated I-Kiribati have a good command of English, though noticeably less so in the younger age group. Both languages are used in government and business but the parliament is conducted in I-Kiribati and the local press is mostly in I-Kiribati.

Religion

Religion has a strong influence on the local population. Christianity is the major faith, with a small number of Muslim and Baha'i followers. Christian denominations represented in Kiribati have large active congregations as well as numerous choirs and dance groups. Individual islands are commonly dominated by one denomination. The CIA *World Factbook* reports that the Roman Catholic Church (56%) and Kiribati Protestant Church (Congregational) (33%) are the main religious denominations. All denominations provide secondary schooling and other community facilities.

Customs

The Maneaba

A maneaba is a traditional meeting house. The word maneaba is derived from the word "mane", to collect or bring together, and "aba", the land or people of the land. The maneaba is a place where issues of social, political and economic significance are discussed and in particular it is where the Unimane (elder men) meet to discuss matters concerning village life. The maneaba provides a place for community meetings, communal feasts and recreation such as dancing and singing. The maneaba also provides accommodation for visitors.

When visiting a maneaba, a visitor should avoid walking across the middle of the floor, should sit in a similar way to the I-Kiribati and pay due respect to the Unimane and the Unaine (elder women). Women in particular should dress conservatively, covering their shoulders and wearing a long skirt that goes below the knees. Women should also bring a lava lava (sarong) to cover their lower half when they sit on the floor. Shoes should be removed before stepping into the maneaba.

Role of the Unimane

The I-Kiribati culture endows the old, both men and women, with special dignity and authority. Meetings of the Unimane held in the maneaba are still important to the decision making process in village life and for upholding the rules of behaviour. For many, effective political power is still in the hands of the Unimane and in outer islands, it can be the source of decisions that are viewed on those islands as having more weight than the law. In South Tarawa, this social construct is slowly deteriorating due to the influence of urbanisation, religious affiliations and more modern institutions being prioritised by the younger generation.

Family

The family occupies a central role in I-Kiribati society. The concept of sharing and reciprocity, known as bubuti (pronounced booboosee), provides an informal welfare support system for people in the extended family. Status in I-Kiribati society is maintained by acknowledging one's equality with others and by not offending or embarrassing people. Though in some ways there is a strong societal hierarchy, Kiribati is essentially an egalitarian society.

Websites for further government and economic information

DFAT country website for Kiribati

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/kiribati/>

Parliament of Kiribati

<http://www.parliament.gov.ki/>

CIA World Factbook on Kiribati

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kr.html>

Section II - Life at Post

General

The majority of the population of Kiribati live in traditional village settings, with strong orientation around the extended family and the Unimane and Unaine, who continue to play a prominent role in society. Eating, singing and traditional dancing are an important part of I-Kiribati culture and nearly every village has a maneaba where people gather for council and other meetings and botakis (parties). The I-Kiribati are generally friendly and courteous to foreigners and are likely to extend invitations to social gatherings and events.

On South Tarawa, the main housing areas are Betio (the major port and commercial centre), Bairiki (the government and administrative centre and where the Australian and New Zealand High Commissions are located) and Bikenibeu (near the airport). The Kiribati Housing Corporation owns a large number of houses which are allocated to public servants. Houses are basic by Australian standards, ranging from structures made from wood and thatched traditional materials to solid houses with iron roofs.

Causeways from Betio (the port at the end of South Tarawa) to Buota (the first island of North Tarawa just past the airport) link by road the islets that make up South Tarawa. The road is a narrow, two way single lane road that is palm tree lined most of the way and runs a total distance of approximately 32km. Driving through villages can be an obstacle course (particularly at night), requiring navigation between the numerous potholes, other vehicles, meandering adults, children playing, dogs, pigs, chickens and the occasional falling coconut. There are around twenty speed bumps between the airport and Betio which are rarely marked and not always easy to see. The speed bumps have succeeded in reducing the road toll and keeping travel to the 40 km per hour speed limit in villages. The road is reputed to be the worst in the Pacific, but construction has commenced on significant upgrades.

The South Tarawa islets are long and narrow, varying in width from the road causeways to no more than 750 metres.

As there are few employment opportunities other than a subsistence existence on the outer islands, an increasing number of young people are moving to South Tarawa in search of paid employment or education. Overcrowding is putting pressure on basic services such as sewerage, water, garbage and electricity and areas such as Betio are becoming heavily polluted. Crime, particularly opportunistic theft, has increased in recent years and recently there have been reports of serious assaults on I-Kiribati women. Alcohol and kava abuse appears to be increasing. Appropriate vigilance and common sense in public places is strongly recommended, particularly at night time and after the fortnightly public service pay day.

Most expatriates find the culture and traditions interesting, but general day to day living can be monotonous and frustrating - particularly given the continual problems with telecommunications and water, electricity and fuel supplies. The irregularity of food supplies and the shortage of fresh fruit and vegetables is a challenge, as is the sense of isolation and remoteness, which is exacerbated by the infrequent and expensive international air services. The lack of western orientated social activities such as cinemas, restaurants, organised sporting activities, gyms and shopping can make life very limited for officers. Tarawa however, does offer opportunities for walking, swimming, fishing and boating. The beach areas of North Tarawa are particularly beautiful, deserted and generally clean. Use of the High Commission boat provides opportunities for the Australia-based staff and their families and guests to go fishing and enjoy snorkelling and swimming trips.

Like all hot and humid climates, there is the usual battle with ants, mosquitoes, cockroaches, rats and mice. Termites are a major problem.

Climate

The central Gilberts, Banaba and the Line and Phoenix Islands have a maritime equatorial climate. The islands further north and south are tropical. The mean annual temperature for Tarawa is 28.1 degrees Celsius, with an average low of 27.4 and an average high of 28.7. The variation in annual and daily ranges is small. Easterly trade winds blow throughout most of the year, making the nights generally cool and pleasant. Rainfall is about 1,300mm mean annual for islands near the equator, rising to 3,000mm in the north, with some islands in the south suffering from periodic drought. Yearly rainfall varies dramatically, with exceptionally wet periods followed by protracted droughts of several months. Humidity can be high during the monsoon periods. All islands are outside the cyclone belt.

Section III - Organisation of Mission

Establishment

There are five -based staff attached to the mission - the High Commissioner, Counsellor Development, First Secretary and Consul (SAO) and two Development Program Specialist located at either the Chancery or Aid Program Office Annex. Two Defence staff from the Navy, a Maritime Surveillance Adviser and a Chief Petty Officer are unattached and live and work in Batio with the Police Maritime Unit of the Kiribati Police Service.

The locally engaged staff cover all aspects of work at the High Commission, from overseeing aid programs to cleaning, gardening and guarding.

Office Hours

The office hours are 8.30am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday, Staff have a a one hour lunch between midday and 2.00pm. Public holidays are a mix of holidays observed in Kiribati and Australia.

Other Missions

The New Zealand High Commission is staffed by a resident High Commissioner, Deputy High Commissioner and Second Secretary is in Bairiki, along with the Embassy of Tawian. Cuba has a Charge d'Affaires and the UN is represented by WHO and UNESCO

Section IV - Accommodation

Office

The chancery is located in Bairiki close to the President's Office, the State House and some government ministries. It is a two-storey, free-standing building on the ocean side of the road and offers a pleasant working environment. The chancery was built in 1983 and refurbished in 2010-11.

The annex is approximately 500 metres from the Chancery on the lagoon side of the road. This two story building was originally a DFAT residence and upstairs includes meeting space and a basic two bedroom self-contained accommodation.

Residential

The Head of Mission occupies a two-storey, free-standing residence that was rebuilt in 1986. It faces north and has a good view over the lagoon. It is a comfortable residence with good reception facilities on the first floor, an adequate kitchen and a large balcony for entertaining. The dining room is small. On the first floor there are four bedrooms, including a master bedroom suite, and a study. The ground floor has a private guest suite with bedroom and bathroom, an informal reception/ lounge area, two other bedrooms, a separate kitchen and shower/toilet facilities. The residence has a large garden and a maneaba suitable for functions.

The residence of the First Secretary/SAO is a two-storey, freestanding house built in 1983 on the lagoon side of the road opposite St Anne's Pre-School. The first floor has a master bedroom with en suite, two bedrooms, an adequate kitchen, a dining area and lounge room. On the ground floor is a large room with two single beds, a sitting room and two storage rooms. The balcony is large and has good views over the lagoon.

The Counsellor Development's residence was completed in November 1988 and is a two-storey, free standing house located on the ocean side of the road. It has three bedrooms, one with an en suite, an adequate kitchen, dining area and lounge room. It has a large balcony with good views of the ocean.

One Development Program Specialist is accommodated in the Defence compound on Betio in a modern free-standing two-story house. The other Specialist is currently accommodated in a serviced apartment in Bikenibau while waiting for suitable private leased housing to be constructed.

The non-leased residences are within easy walking distance of the chancery. All residences have space for vegetable gardens. Gardening is difficult due to the lack of soil, low rainfall, water shortages and harsh climate. With some effort it is possible to grow cucumber, cabbage, tomatoes, snake beans, capsicum, eggplant, watermelon, pumpkin and herbs.

Residences and offices are prefabricated and require continual maintenance to keep them in good condition. All have air-conditioning and fans.

With the exception of the HOM residence, asbestos was used in building construction. The buildings are safe and present no danger while the asbestos material remains static. Officers and spouses arriving at the post are to become familiar with the asbestos installations and the relevant Asbestos Management Plan.

Section V - Living Conditions

Services

Arrival

The current route is typically via Nadi in Fiji to Tarawa on Fiji Airways. Our Airline offers an alternate route from Brisbane via Nauru on Mondays each fortnight (subject to last minute changes). Fiji Airways has two flights per week, usually Sunday and Thursday. On arrival, officers move directly into allocated housing with a settling-in kit and initial assistance with food shopping, banking and other settling in requirements.

Personal effects are shipped via sea freight to post as there is no air cargo service to Kiribati. Shipping at least one month in advance of arrival is advisable due to the variations in shipping schedules. It is advisable to bring substantial supplies of non-perishable food and toiletries. While variety has improved locally over recent years, supplies are spasmodic with lines often no longer stocked.

Banking

The Australian dollar is the local currency. Credit cards in general are not accepted in Kiribati but a few of the larger businesses on Tarawa do take Visa (at a fee of \$20 - \$30 per transaction). Only the larger outlets provide EFTPOS on request, its availability is not advertised.

The ANZ Bank (a joint venture between the Government of Kiribati and the ANZ Bank) is the only bank in Kiribati. While it is not difficult to set up bank accounts, officers are usually assisted by local staff or the Bank Manager as the bank is always crowded, the process is time consuming and language can be a problem.

The bank accepts personal Australian bank cheques for credit to local bank accounts but clearing normally takes six weeks. The fee charged for this service depends on the amount required. Cash can be drawn against Visa and MasterCard at the bank counter or through the ATM.

The bank's main office is at Bairiki and there is a branch at Betio. ATMs may be found at the bank branches, the University of South Pacific and the Taotin store in Teoraereke, the Inanoi store at Bikenibeu and at the hospital.

Cinema/Theatre

There are no cinemas, theatres or means of pursuing theatrical activities in Tarawa

Clothing

The I-Kiribati dress modestly, covering particularly their thighs and for women, their shoulders. Shoes are rarely worn by the I-Kiribati. Standard casual dress for I-Kiribati women is a lava lava (sarong) and a tibuta (smocked top). Men wear lava lavas, shorts to the knee, slacks, t-shirts and short-sleeved shirts. Local residents wear western-style clothes to the office. With increasing second-hand clothing imports, less traditional wear is evident.

Local material supplies are limited but some colourful island print materials can be found. If officers want to make their own clothing or organise for clothes to be made locally, all sewing items, such as threads, patterns, zips and needles should be brought from Australia as haberdashery supplies are limited. Sewing machines cannot be repaired locally. Reasonable local dressmakers can be found and a number of establishments produce items of apparel, provide screen printing and make alterations for a nominal price.

Officers should bring a good supply of office clothing and shoes as there are few outlets for purchasing new clothing in Kiribati. Clothing brought to post should be washable as there are no dry cleaners.

(i) Clothing (Men)

Acceptable office dress is summer slacks and an open-neck shirt. Slacks and open-neck shirts are also acceptable for most evening functions. A tie is normally worn for the Kiribati Independence Day Ceremony, at the ANZAC ceremony and in the public gallery in Parliament. Modest casual wear is generally acceptable for most functions. Cotton fabrics are preferable to synthetics. Sandals are commonly worn at social and official functions and reef/canyoning shoes should always be worn on the beach and when swimming. All clothing should be brought from Australia, as local supplies are limited and of generally inferior quality.

(ii) Clothing (Women)

Acceptable office dress is light summer clothing: dress, skirt, slacks, short-sleeved tops and sandals. Light dresses and open-shoes/sandals are common for evening wear and official functions. Slacks and shorts are often worn by women attending casual social functions, but should not be worn when visiting government officials during working hours. In maneabas, modest dresses or skirts should be worn and the skirt length should be long enough to cover beyond the knee. A lava lava (sarong) is handy for covering the legs if required to sit on the floor. Women should wear shorts to the knee, particularly in the presence of I-Kiribati, and reef/canyoning shoes when swimming. A lava lava is required over swimming costumes when not swimming.

Clothing made from cotton fabrics is preferable to synthetics. Linen and silk may be worn but should be very light and washable.

A good supply of clothing and underwear should be brought from Australia. Second hand clothing from Australia, tibutas and lava lavas are readily available.

(iv) Laundry and Dry Cleaning

Each High Commission residence has a washing machine and dryer. There are no commercial dry cleaning facilities. Most officers rely on domestic staff to do their washing and ironing.

Clubs/Social organisations

The Lagoon Club at Ambo village, approximately 6 km east of Bairiki, is the only club currently in operation. Facilities are very basic. Membership must be paid if you wish to enter the club. The club is an open air bar that is open nightly and during the day on weekends. There is limited food service available and they offer a BBQ facility that can be used on a BYO basis. There are two well-maintained pool tables, a dart board and a small playground for children.

The Betio Fishing Club meets at the Captain's Bar, Betio, and once a month conducts a fishing competition, weigh in and quiz night. All visitors are welcome to attend, though to participate in the fishing competition a once-off membership fee needs to be paid. The Australian High Commission has a corporate membership and staff participate in the fishing competitions.

Domestic Assistance

Household domestic assistance is available for all A-based staff. There are few experienced domestic staff in Tarawa but people can be employed to clean, wash and iron. It is very difficult to find staff who can cook to an appropriate standard. It is advisable to retain a gardener in order to maintain a vegetable garden.

As the hygienic preparation of food at home is key to maintaining good health, domestic staff should be trained to properly clean, particularly the kitchen and bathroom areas. Newly employed domestic staff would also require training in the use and cleaning of household equipment such as the washing machine and any kitchen appliances.

Domestic staff are paid an hourly rate of \$2.90 and receive bus fares of \$1.20 to \$2.80 to/from work each day. New domestic staff are usually sourced through word of mouth recommendations from other domestic staff or local staff in the High Commission.

Entertaining/Restaurants

Most entertaining is done at home as quality and cleanliness can be guaranteed.

Private catering for functions is available and it is advisable to check with local staff to receive suggestions. The quality is well below Australian standards, with hygiene and food safety standards lacking when compared to Australia.

Options available include:

Abetao	Tabon Ta Kee Kee	lunch, dinner
Ambo	Utireirei Motel	breakfast, lunch, dinner
Bairiki	Mary's Restaurant	breakfast, lunch, dinner
Bairiki	Taotin Restaurant	lunch, dinner
Banraeaba	Pacific Chinese (sic) Restaurant	lunch, dinner
Betio	A' Boys Kitchen	lunch, dinner
Betio	Japanese Curry House	lunch, dinner
Bikenibeu	Chatterbox cafe	lunch
Bikenibeu	Otintaai International Hotel	breakfast, lunch, dinner at fixed times
Bikenibeu	Yum Yum Restaurant	lunch, dinner
Nawerewere	Paradise Restaurant	lunch, dinner
Nawerewere	Tiaban Restaurant	lunch, dinner
Teoraereke	Oriental Restaurant	lunch, dinner
Teoraereke	Golden Restaurant	lunch, dinner

Food

Local fresh food consists of fish, pork, eggs, bananas, pawpaw, coconuts, breadfruit, pandanus fruit and babai (form of taro). Chinese cabbage, lettuce, cucumbers, corn, chilli, capsicum, eggplants, tomatoes, watermelon and a squash like pumpkin are also grown locally and are increasingly available. Excellent tuna and other fish can be bought from the fish market, from the fish factory outlet in Batio or roadside vendors. When purchasing fresh fish, officers should ensure that fish are freshly caught that day and have clear eyes, slippery skin and are properly blooded. Officers can source fish through contacts with local and domestic staff and can ask domestic staff to buy, clean and fillet fish. Lobsters are often brought directly to the High Commission and are cheap to purchase but officers should enquire as to where they were caught. Local staff are a good source of knowledge on local produce and what is suitable for purchase.

As the range of ingredients available in stores is basic and the supply erratic, officers are advised to bring a stock of edible items to post. Supplies are erratic and stock is often not available or out of date. Typically word of mouth facilitates the expatriate rush on the shops when a shipment arrives, so it is advisable to shop to the shipping schedules. Tinned products (including fruit, vegetables, meat and fish), pasta sauces, pasta and rice are widely available but selections are limited. Black and Gold branded products are common. A reasonable range of biscuits is available, including Tim Tams. Chocolate bars are sometimes available. Whilst bread is available locally (both sweet and bread similar to Australia and frozen bread is sent from Australia in shipments), it is highly advisable to bring your own bread maker and supplies of bread mix due to potential shortages of supplies in Tarawa.

A limited selection of fresh fruit and vegetables is brought in from Australia but items are expensive and sometimes in poor condition. Beef, cold cuts, sausages and chicken are imported frozen from Australia, Fiji and occasionally from Vanuatu but are generally of inferior cuts. The meat is not well labelled and is best marinated or cooked in a slow cooker or casserole. Milk is most commonly UHT or powdered, with New Zealand fresh milk occasionally available. With the exception of processed cheese and ice cream, dairy products are not available locally. It is worth considering bringing your own ice-cream and yogurt makers. Frozen goods, including ice-cream, vegetables and meat (especially chicken) are available at times but have often melted and been re-frozen.

Beers, wines and spirit supplies on the island are subject to the same fluctuations as food supplies. Wine is imported from Australia, is expensive and can be heat affected. Officers should bring a supply in their uplift and import bulk orders as required.

Officers may also wish to bring a coffee machine and supply of coffee. The Chatterbox café in Bikenibau provides good quality coffee in a pleasant air-conditioned environment.

Hairdressing

There is one hairdresser in Betio and some local and expatriate residents are available to cut both men's and women's hair on an ad hoc basis. It is recommended that officers consider bringing hair cutting scissors, clippers and a supply of hair products such as colours, shampoo and conditioner (although usually available, brand choices are limited).

Media

The local Broadcasting and Publications Authority transmits Radio Kiribati daily on 846 kHz and FM101. Radio Australia is transmitted 24 hours a day on FM90. It is possible to hear Marshall Islands radio on 1100

kHz throughout the day and evening (depending upon the radio and weather conditions). There are no local television broadcasts but the residences are connected to Sky Pacific satellite TV which broadcasts Fiji One and a good range of cable channels including Australia Network. There are plans for Australian television to be provided by satellite link through a commercial provider but a start date has yet to be announced.

The only newspapers available are three locally produced weekly newsletters published mostly in I-Kiribati. International new coverage is limited and is often of a trivial nature. A weekly summary in English of major local news is provided to officers via email.

Officers should consider personal subscriptions to magazines and electronic media of interest.

Recreation/Sport

Recreational activities are limited to outdoor pursuits such as tennis, walking, swimming, snorkelling, boating and fishing. Officers should bring their own sports equipment and supplies such as tennis balls to post. Bike riding is common, but is only recommended in North Tarawa away from the congested and poor roads of South Tarawa.

The High Commission has a power boat that A-based staff are able to use for recreation purposes. The boat can be used for water-skiing or travelling to North Tarawa, Biketawa or Bikeman (a sand island in the middle of the lagoon) for swimming, fishing, diving or snorkelling.

Given the high level of pollution, swimming in the lagoon close to Tarawa is not recommended but swimming ocean side on the reef is possible in some locations. Surfing is also a possibility at some locations along Tarawa, though vigilance is required because of the reef. It is recommended that these water activities are undertaken with other people who have local knowledge of the conditions. There is an informal expat swimming group that can be joined for a weekly swim.

The Tarawa Lagoon is an ideal sailing, kayaking and wind-surfing location for both beginners and experienced sailing enthusiasts. However, extreme care should be taken at all times as weather conditions can change quickly and dramatically. Sail boats are rarely available for sale locally, so if officers are serious about sailing they should consider bringing a boat with them. Local canoes, which make excellent sailing boats, can be purchased locally, second hand or new. Sailboards should be brought from Australia, as they are not available locally.

The Betio Sports Fishing club holds monthly game fishing competitions. If officers are interested in fishing, rods, trawling lures and equipment should be brought from Australia. Fish caught within the lagoon area should not be eaten because of pollution.

There is a small above ground swimming pool and a tennis court with lights in the High Commission recreation area. The recreation area also includes a small kitchen/bar area, barbeque and change rooms that can be used for entertaining after hours and on the weekends.

At the High Commission, expatriates play soccer every Wednesday night and tennis and volley ball are organised regularly.

There are DVD stores in Bairiki, Betio, Bikenibeu and Teoraereke. The DVDs are locally sourced and can be pirated new release movies. Officers should bring their own TV and DVD players to post. An all regions DVD player is recommended for the odd occasion when a non-pirated movie is available to buy/rent.

The National Library is situated close to the Chancery and has a restricted range of books for all ages. To borrow items, ID is requested and a nominal membership fee is charged.

To get away from it all, travel to North Tarawa and the outer islands is suggested. However, tourist accommodation in Kiribati is very basic. In North Tarawa, a walk and swim at the broken bridge is a common day trip. The popular (with expatriates) Tabon Te Kee Kee Homestay in Abatao at the start of the broken bridge walk offers clean and very pleasant traditional style accommodation with shared bathrooms. It provides good quality local style meals and has a coffee machine. Overnight stays including all meals cost between \$60-\$100. The Tabuki Retreat on the Tabuki inlet near the broken bridge is also reasonable. Most outer islands have guesthouses, which are of a very basic standard. It is necessary to book guesthouse accommodation through the Ministry of Home Affairs before departing Tarawa. Travel is via a local ferry service or through Air Kiribati. There is a better standard guesthouse on the island of Butaritari. Kiritimati (Christmas) Island, which is accessed via international flights from Nadi, has hotel accommodation of an acceptable standard.

Religious Observance

Weekly services are held by all religious denominations in Tarawa.

Transport

There are no traffic lights and very few traffic signs on Tarawa. Speeding, drink driving and dangerous overtaking are rampant on the roads but speed bumps do tend to slow vehicles down, particularly when passing through villages. Police occasionally check car speeds but rarely test for drink driving. Driving at night can be particularly difficult as there are few street lights and, as the roads pass through villages, adults as well as children and animals wander onto the road. Extreme care must be taken while walking close to the roads or cycling.

(i) Public

The only public transport on Tarawa is mini-buses that drive up and down the length of South Tarawa collecting passengers that signal for the bus to stop. The buses can be old, often overcrowded and some are not safe by Australian standards. The drivers are paid commission per passenger, so this often results in aggressive driving and speeding. The buses are frequent during the day on weekdays but cease to operate after 9.00pm on weeknights and midnight on weekends and are irregular on Sundays. After rain, the buses disappear to prevent damage caused by the severely deteriorated road. There is one taxi. Hire cars can be arranged from some motels and companies and cost around \$50 per day.

(ii) Official

The High Commission operates a Toyota Aurion Prodigy as the HOM vehicle (purchased March 2010), a Toyota double cab 4WD pick-up (purchased 2010), a Yamaha motor cycle, and a Kevlacat 2400 offshore boat (6.5m). The boat is for recreational purposes.

(iii) Private

Most officers find a car necessary in Tarawa because there is no suitable public transport. Shopping often requires travelling between villages to access everything needed and travel is slow due to the road conditions and length of the atoll. Most officers purchase their predecessor's vehicle or a second hand RAV4 from Japanese car exporters via the internet. Officers who wish to import a vehicle must seek post approval and assistance before arranging Tropical rust-proofing before shipment is suggested to help minimise the effects of climatic conditions, salt air and ocean washed causeways that cause cars to corrode and deteriorate quickly. A well maintained car in Tarawa can be expected to last five years after import.

A motorbike or scooter may offer a viable alternative as a limited selection is available locally.

(iv) Insurance/Licences

Comprehensive car insurance can be obtained locally.

International and Australian driving licenses are recognised on Tarawa. Officers should obtain a local driving licence on arrival. The cost is \$30.00 and they are valid for one year.

(v) Fuel

Diesel and unleaded petrol are available and are cheaper than in Australia. VAT can be claimed back from the government for those with diplomatic privileges.

Utilities/Communications

Electricity is 240 volts and plugs are of the three-point Australian variety, though the cycles are different and electric clocks tend to run fast. Power outages are common and supply is irregular. Expensive and sensitive electrical equipment (laptops, TVs and stereos) should be fitted with surge protectors and computers with UPS units.

All offices and residences have emergency generators maintained by the High Commission.

The telephone service, both mobile and land lines, is adequate on South Tarawa but communication with the outer islands is difficult. IDD is available and reliable. Australian mobile phones with global roaming and Blackberrys do not work in Tarawa. SMS communication on a local mobile is only available on Tarawa and between Tarawa and Kiritimati Island. International SMS messages are unable to be sent.

TSKL is the only internet service provider in Tarawa. Plan costs range from \$30-\$350 per month and include ADSL connections.

The local post office dispatches and receives letters and parcels. There is no home delivery of mail or delivery to the office. The chancery post office box or the diplomatic mail bag may be used by officers and their families.

The local postal address is: Australian High Commission, PO Box 77, Bairiki, Tarawa, Republic of Kiribati, Central Pacific. Deliveries through the bag from Australia should be addressed to: Australian High Commission, Locked Bag 40, Tarawa Bag, Kingston ACT 2604.

While Australia dispatches a diplomatic bag most weeks, the bag may be detained in Nadi and queued for delivery. This is a particular problem in December. There are generally no problems sending the diplomatic bag to Canberra, but despatches may be several weeks apart due to the low volume.

Officers should bring a supply of Australian stamps or stamped envelopes in order to use the diplomatic bag for return mail to Australia. Kiribati stamps are available from the Philatelic Bureau, Betio, and post offices in Bairiki, Betio and Bikenibeu. Postage to Australia is 60 cents for letters (less than 20 gm) and 30 cents for post cards.

Stationery supplies are irregular, of poor quality and limited in variety. Post cards are available from some outlets. It is suggested that a supply of greeting cards, especially Christmas, first birthday and wedding cards, be purchased in Australia.

Dependant Issues

****IMPORTANT****

In 2007, following advice from post and in consultation with the Departmental Medical Adviser, Tarawa has been placed on the list of posts where the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will not send dependant children. Life on Tarawa could pose particular problems for A-based staff with children as infrastructure (including education facilities) is poor and medical support extremely limited.

Education

The High Commission does not recommend local schooling for children of any age. English language is rarely used in schools and education standards are exceedingly poor. Distance learning arrangements are sometimes used by expatriate families, but problems may be experienced due to the lack of available local support.

There are four schools in Tarawa that teach their classes in English - the Seventh Day Adventist Pre-school in Korobu, Rurubao Primary School in Bairiki, King George V and Elaine Bernacchi High School (KGVEBS) in Bikenibai and Moroni High School run by the Mormons in Eita. These schools are all fee paying schools, but rates are low in comparison to Australia. As with most schools in Kiribati, educational standards and facilities are poor and sanitary arrangements are wanting. Classrooms are not air-conditioned and fans are rare. Outside the classroom, children will speak almost exclusively in Kiribati language. Children are accepted at Rurubao from age five and a half but must turn six within the half year they enrol. The school has three classes - Class One covers ages 5 and a half to 7; Class Two ages 8 to 9 and Class Three ages 10 to 12.

Primary school hours are from 8.00am -1.00pm with a break from 11.30am -midday. Secondary schools operate from 8 am to 3 pm. To enrol children, an application form is to be completed and an interview with the headmaster is normal. School uniforms are required and these are made locally.

Employment/Education Opportunities for Spouses

Spouses can obtain a work permit upon application to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, but limited work opportunities are available. If work is found, the remuneration is low by Australian standards. Australia does not have a formal bilateral working agreement with Kiribati however spouses are not required to relinquish their diplomatic status to undertake work.

There are numerous opportunities to undertake volunteer work, including reading to children in schools and helping Kiribati Institute of Technology (KIT) students practice English conversation.

The Tarawa extension of the University of the South Pacific offers some opportunity for further studies at undergraduate level. External courses from Australia are the usual option for further education.

Recognition/Treatment of De Facto and Same Sex Partners

Due to the strong influence of religion and cultural attitudes towards the family, same sex partners do not receive the same kind of recognition or understanding that officers may be used to elsewhere. Foreigners in same sex relationships will be tolerated but not really understood. There is little evidence of a gay/lesbian sub-cultural in Tarawa and I-Kiribati involved in open same sex relationships are considered an embarrassment or a shame to their families.

De facto couples have the same legal rights as married couples and increasingly will receive social acceptance with the blessing of both families. Most expatriates in de facto relationships though find greater acceptance by referring to their partner as their husband or wife, which are terms loosely used in Kiribati.

Personal Issues

Health and Medical/Dental Facilities

Officers requiring basic medical treatment have access to the Marine Training Centre, which has a clinic staffed by an expatriate doctor.

The hospital on South Tarawa has very limited medical/dental services and a low standard of hygiene. The dental clinic is virtually non-operational and should only be used for consultations and any offered treatment should be carefully considered. There are very basic medical clinics in Betio and Bairiki staffed by nurses. Local doctors are often difficult to locate and the standards of professionalism and competency vary greatly.

The hospital has a dispensary but supplies of drugs are limited and can be out of date. Officers are advised to bring sufficient quantities of personal prescription medications and non-prescription drugs, including vitamins. Post has a limited first aid kit.

Medical facilities on outer islands are extremely basic and first aid kits should be carried when officers travel to these locations.

Vaccinations are recommended by the departmental medical adviser as part of pre-posting preparations. Hepatitis A and B as well as tuberculosis are common in Tarawa. Officers should take particular care with regard to hygiene and should only drink treated rainwater or bottled water. Stomach upsets and diarrhoea are common. Care should be taken with hygiene and the selection and preparation of food and water.

The most common health problems are ear infections (tropical ear), conjunctivitis and chest and throat infections. Cuts (especially from coral), abrasions and insect bites can become septic and ulcerous very quickly unless treated properly.

Mosquitoes are prevalent and although they do not carry malaria, outbreaks of dengue fever occur regularly. Officers should bring tropical strength insect repellent and an adequate supply of 30+ sun protection lotions.

Officers should be vigilant with their health while in Tarawa and not allow problems to go untreated or to worsen.

DFAT staff are reminded that advice can be sought from the department's medical adviser prior, during and on completion of posting.

Pharmaceuticals/Toiletries

There are no pharmacies on Tarawa. Toiletries and some pharmaceuticals are generally available in supermarkets but choice is severely limited and supply is erratic. Modern sanitary supplies, cosmetics, skin care products and sunscreens are occasionally available. Post has a supply of condoms for staff, and they are also freely available from the clinics.

Officers should consider bringing a large stock of toiletries and pharmaceuticals with them, particularly if choice is a concern or if there is a preference for particular brands. It is suggested that supply be brought of tampons and sanitary products, contraceptives, throat lozenges, ear drops, cough syrup, cold and flu tablets, band aids, waterproof band aids, elastic bandages, eye drops, antiseptic powder and antibiotic cream. While the list is not exhaustive, officers should not expect to buy regular health care products in Tarawa.

Leave

Officers are entitled to an extra ten days additional hardship leave per annum and one mid-term fare to Canberra during a one year posting.

Personal Security

With people migrating from outer islands to Tarawa in search of paid employment, there has been an increase in the incidence of crime, mainly opportunistic theft, as well as intimidation and threats of violence. Break-ins mostly occur in the heavily populated areas, usually when the house is vacant.

The I-Kiribati can be difficult to deal with when intoxicated and where possible should be avoided or treated with caution. Appropriate vigilance and safety precautions should be taken, especially by officers, both male and female when living or travelling alone.

Dogs are highly territorial in Kiribati and most houses have at least one dog and no fencing. Officers should be cautious of dogs and avoid them when walking, particularly at night. Dogs are easily intimidated though and will retreat when a rock is thrown. As most animals do not get de-sexed, Tarawa has a problem with stray dogs and cats. The councils have attempted to control the stray dog population but packs can often be seen.

While Tarawa is not considered unsafe, common sense should prevail as violent crimes do occur and without a connection to an extended family/community, foreigners are particularly vulnerable. Officers should adopt the same kind of awareness of their personal safety as they would in an Australian city.

Special Needs

Facilities for those with special needs are very limited in Tarawa. Tarawa has a school for the disabled that is supported through Australian aid funding but it is not comparable to anything in Australia. Community consideration for those with special needs is lacking and shops/offices do not cater for those with limited mobility.

Support

Family Liaison Office

Staff are reminded that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has a Family Liaison Office (FLO) where advice can be sought on a broad range of topics before, during and after posting. The FLO can be contacted by email on flo@dfat.gov.au.

Community Liaison Officer

In lieu of a Community Liaison Officer the HOM and SAO take an active interest in the well-being of all staff. Any specific questions on pre-posting planning can be directed to the SAO.

Section VI - Protocol

Head of Mission

The High Commissioner presents credentials to the President shortly after arrival in a low key meeting. The only other resident representatives in Tarawa are from New Zealand, Taiwan (Kiribati recognises Taiwan) and Cuba (Chargé d'Affaires). Non-resident Heads of Mission are accredited from capitals such as Suva, Canberra, Wellington, Jakarta and Port Moresby. When non-resident HOMs visit Tarawa, a call on the High Commissioner is usually included in their program.

General

Dealings with government officials, including the President, are relaxed and free from rigorous protocol. However, it is always important to follow local practice that defers to the position and status of the Head of State, Ministers and senior officials.

Identity cards are not issued. Business cards are not widely used by I-Kiribati, but A-based officers find them useful for visitors.

Section VII - Privileges

Diplomatic Staff

Diplomatic staff are able to import goods, including a motor vehicle, duty free. Duty is reimbursed by Customs on production of receipts for alcohol, fuel and some food items purchased from local outlets.

Non-Diplomatic Staff

Kiribati provides first entry privileges for Defence Co-operation staff and AusAID Development Program Specialists. Under the first entry privileges, staff can import a car and import duty free alcohol within the first six months. After six months, import duties and other charges are payable on all imported goods.

Airport facilitation

The airport VIP room is available for the HOM, visiting Ministers and senior officials, and the family and guests of the HOM (providing the HOM is present for arrival and/or departure) by way of request to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration via a Third Person Note (TPN).

- Bailey, E. E. **The Christmas Island story**
London: Stacey International, 1977
A detailed history of this island.
- Grimble, A. **A pattern of islands**
Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981
Chronicle of colonial times and is very entertaining, providing a fascinating account of traditional i-Kiribati life.
- Grimble, A. F., & Maude, H. E. **Tungaru traditions: writings on the atoll culture of the Gilbert Islands**
Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1989
- Van Trease, H. **Atoll politics: the Republic of Kiribati**
Christchurch, N.Z.: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Canterbury, 1993
- Davey, R. L. **The laws of the Republic of Kiribati: containing the Constitution and the Acts, ordinances and subsidiary legislation thereunder enacted before the 1st day of January 1982 together with certain orders in council and other provisions relating to Kiribati**
Bairiki, Tarawa, Kiribati: Office of the Attorney-General, 1982 (rev. ed.)
- Iuta, T. **Politics in Kiribati**
Tarawa: Kiribati Extension Centre and Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific, 1980
- Talu, A. **Kiribati: aspects of history**
Tarawa: Published jointly by the Institute of Pacific Studies and Extension Services, University of the South Pacific and the Ministry of Education, Training and Culture, Kiribati Government, 1984
- Uriam, K. K. **In their own words: history and society in Gilbertese oral tradition**
Canberra: Journal of Pacific History, 1995
Provides valuable insights into Kiribati culture and history.
- Macdonald, B. **Cinderellas of the Empire: towards a history of Kiribati and Tuvalu**
Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 2001
- Tarte, D. **Islands of the frigate bird: a novel**
Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1999
A good novel based on historical evidence and legend.
- Flora, C. J. **Abemama, an atoll: latitude 0° 24' north, longitude 173° 52' east**
Everson, WA: Jero Enterprises, 1994
- Three publications (among many) provide good accounts of the Second World War period and the Battle of Tarawa:
- McQuarrie, P. **Conflict in Kiribati: a history of the Second World War**
Christchurch, N.Z.: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Canterbury, 2000
- Sherrod, R. L. **Tarawa: the story of a battle**
Fredericksburg, TX: Admiral Nimitz Foundation, 1999
- Hammel, E. M., & Lane, J. E. **Bloody Tarawa: the 2d Marine Division, November 20-23, 1943**
Grand Rapids, Mich: Zenith, 2006

Film List

"Kiribati? Here we are" directed by John Shaw, 1979, shows the lifestyle, their history and the effects of World War II at the time of Kiribati's Independence.

"The Human Face of the Pacific: ATOLL - life in Kiribati" 1983 follows a group of villages through several traditional ceremonies.

Both of these films can be viewed or purchased at Screen Sound Australia in Acton, Canberra

The following document the Battle of Tarawa in WWII:

Nostalgia World War II Video Library #7 (1943-1944-USA)

Battle of Tarawa – Great Battles of World War II

Websites of Interest

DFAT country website for Kiribati
Australian High Commission in Kiribati
Parliament of Kiribati

Kiribati National Tourism Office
World Health Organisation (WHO)

Kiribati profile

CIA World Factbook on Kiribati

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/kiribati/>
<http://www.kiribati.embassy.gov.au/>
<http://www.parliament.gov.ki/>
<http://www.kiribatitourism.gov.ki/>
<http://www.who.int/countries/kir/en/>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kr.html>