

# **EVALUATION OF NIUE AID PROGRAM - SUMMARY**

**24 August 2021**

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<b>Acronyms</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
AAPS	Australia Awards Pacific Scholarships
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIFFP	Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific
AQC	Aid Quality Check
AVI	Australian Volunteers International
BPaC	Building Pacific Capacity
DAP	Direct Aid Program
DCA	Delegated Cooperation Arrangement
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EU	European Union
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (German Development Agency)
GoA	Government of Australia
GoN	Government of Niue
HOM	Head of Mission
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KEQs	Key Evaluation Questions
LES	Locally Engaged Staff/Staff-member
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
NIFF	Niue Infrastructure Financing Facility
PACTAM	Pacific Technical Assistance Mechanism
PMCU	Project Management and Coordination Unit
PWD	People with Disabilities
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
TA	Technical Advisers
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
USP	University of the South Pacific
VfM	Value for Money

# Executive Summary

## 1.1 Background

Niue is a small self-governing state in free association with New Zealand. It shares many of the same challenges faced by small island states, including remoteness, climate vulnerability and limited state capacity. Australia's bilateral aid program to Niue is currently delivered by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) through a Delegated Cooperation Arrangement (DCA). The DCA commenced on 12 June 2014 and will expire on 30 June 2021. It has an annual budget of AU\$1.4M.

Through its Pacific Step-up, Australia has intensified engagement in the Pacific. In Niue, Australia opened a diplomatic mission and appointed the first resident High Commissioner to Niue in August 2020. In recognition of Australia's increased engagement, Australia will transition to an active aid delivery model at the expiration of the DCA. This evaluation will support this transition by determining the impact of Australian development assistance under the DCA. This evaluation reviewed over 40 documents, including aid quality checks, evaluations, and media reports, as well as interviewed 19 stakeholders across the Government of Niue (GoN), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

## 1.2 Findings

### **Achievements of Australia's development assistance under the DCA**

Australia's development assistance has contributed to a **range of achievements that align** with Niue's development objectives and Australia's priorities across education, waste management, economic growth, social cohesion, and Niue's COVID-19 response. Key achievements include co-funding the construction of Niue's only primary school, funding a waste management project which has contributed to improving waste management across Niue, installing two diesel generators and co-funding the ongoing reconstruction of Niue's only wharf.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Background

Niue is a small self-governing state in free association with New Zealand. It has a population of 1,719, with a diaspora of over 20,000 mostly in New Zealand.<sup>1</sup> Niue is one of the most aid dependent countries in the world, with an Official Development Assistance/Gross Domestic Product ratio of 80%.<sup>2</sup> New Zealand is Niue's largest donor (US\$16.11 million in 2018) followed by Australia (US\$1.32 million in 2018) and Japan (US\$958K in 2018).<sup>3</sup> Other donors include the European Union (EU), United Nations agencies, regional organisations, and China. Outside of aid, Niue's primary source of income is from tourism. However, Cyclone Tino, which hit the country in February 2020, and border closures due to COVID-19, have significantly reduced this income source. Niue also does not have the scale to develop a manufacturing base nor a diversified agricultural sector.<sup>4</sup>

Niue and Australia share a close partnership and Australia delivers assistance to Niue to promote prosperity, reduce poverty and enhance stability. While modest, the aid program is a key element of this partnership. Australia supports Niue's goal of developing a stable, broad-based economy, but recognises the challenges faced by small island states, including their aid-dependency, remoteness, climate vulnerability and the limited reach and capacity of the state.

Australia's bilateral aid program to Niue is currently delivered by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) through a Delegated Cooperation Arrangement (DCA). The DCA reflects both countries history and constitutional linkages, as well as the traditional lack of an Australian diplomatic presence. The DCA commenced on 12 June 2014 and will expire on 30 June 2021. The DCA was initially scheduled to run until 2016/2017 with an annual budget of AU\$1.4M and a focus on education and waste management. In 2017, the DCA was extended until 2018. In November 2019, the DCA was further extended to 2021 and its scope was expanded to include support to economic growth and governance. In response to Niue's COVID-19 priorities, the DCA's scope was further expanded in 2020 to include support to economic resilience, public health, and social cohesion.

Australia's bilateral assistance to Niue has remained stable at AU\$1.4M per annum, totalling AU\$11.2M over the duration of the DCA. Of the AU\$1.4M, AU\$1.2M is made available for priority sectors, while AU\$200,000 is provided for Australia Awards Pacific Scholarships (AAPS) which was delivered by New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) in Niue. Australian regional programs, such as Pacific Women, have also delivered projects in Niue.

Through the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper (including the Pacific Step-up) and the COVID-19 Partnerships for Recovery strategy, Australia has committed to intensified engagement in the Pacific in support of a more prosperous and resilient region. Australia appointed the first resident Australian High Commissioner to Niue in August 2020, a significant milestone in the relationship and an affirmation of Australia's commitment to stepping up engagement with Pacific partners. At the expiration of the DCA and in recognition of Australia's intensified engagement, DFAT will transition from the DCA to an active aid delivery model.

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Niue (2020). Niue's Economic Response to COVID-19 – April 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Carpenter et al. (2015). Evaluation of the Niue Country Programme. Adam Smith International, for MFAT.

<sup>3</sup> <https://pacificaidmap.lowyinstitute.org/>

<sup>4</sup> GoN, Niue's Economic Response to COVID-19, April 2020.

## 2.2 Evaluation purpose

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the impact of Australian development assistance to Niue under the DCA. The evaluation findings will be used by DFAT to inform the design of Australia’s direct aid program in Niue.

## 2.3 Evaluation scope

The evaluation focused on the funding delivered through the DCA from 2013/14 to 2020/21. While the evaluation does not expressly evaluate the effectiveness of AAPS, as funding for the scholarships came out of the AU\$1.4M set aside for the DCA and MFAT delivered the program in-country, the evaluation does comment on the impact and value of the scholarships where relevant. Regional programs are not included within the scope of the evaluation.

## 2.4 Key evaluation questions

The evaluation was guided by the Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) in the table below. They were designed to respond to the review’s purposes.

KEQs	Sub-KEQs
<p><b>How has Australia’s development assistance through the DCA supported Niue’s development objectives in education, waste management, economic growth, and governance, and in its COVID-19 Response?</b></p>	<p>What outputs and outcomes has Australian contributed to through the DCA?</p>
	<p>How well have outputs and outcomes aligned with Niue’s development objectives and Australia’s priorities?</p>
	<p>How has GEDSI been considered in implementation and what outcomes have been achieved?</p>
	<p>How well were value for money principles (economy, efficiency, effectiveness, ethics) incorporated in procurement, contracting and implementation decision-making?</p>
	<p>Have the program’s governance and implementation arrangements (DCA) been appropriate and proportionate to the outcomes sought?</p>
	<p>How sustainable are the results and what is the ownership of results among stakeholders, in particular community beneficiaries?</p>
	<p>To what extent has Australia’s assistance been visible, and do beneficiaries understand Australia’s role in providing support through the DCA?</p>

### 3 Methodology

This methodology was developed in consultation with DFAT staff, including through an inception meeting in which the review's scope and key methods were discussed. This meeting then informed an evaluation plan which was agreed between DFAT and the evaluation team.

#### 3.1 Data collection

Data was collected from the sources outlined in the table below. Interviews were not recorded, with detailed notes taken. Interview data was de-identified – both in the analysis and reporting phase. Quotes have not been used where these identify individuals.

Data source	Description
<b>Documents</b>	Over 40 documents were reviewed including Aid Quality Checks (AQC)s, DCA contracts, Niue strategy and planning documents, other donor documents and media reports. See Annex 1 for a full list of documents.
<b>Key informants</b>	Zoom/phone interviews were conducted with 18 key informants (Nine women and nine men): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="528 898 1094 927">• 6 GoN stakeholders (Four women and two men)</li><li data-bbox="528 927 1118 956">• 5 DFAT stakeholders (Three women and two men)</li><li data-bbox="528 956 935 985">• 2 MFAT stakeholders (Two men)</li><li data-bbox="528 985 1174 1014">• 5 community stakeholders (Three men and two women)</li></ul>

#### 3.2 Data analysis and reporting

Evidence from the document review was mapped against the KEQs using an evidence matrix. Interview summaries were developed and entered into a coding framework (an excel document that enabled interview data to be collated and grouped under similar interview questions). Analysis of the interview data occurred on an ongoing, iterative basis during the key informant interviews. Evidence from the document review evidence matrix and the interview coding framework was then synthesised against the KEQs to develop preliminary findings. To provide a framework for identifying future focus areas for Australian development assistance, a rubric was developed which outlined three criteria that sectors were assessed against. These findings were then presented to DFAT in a teleconference.<sup>5</sup> Feedback from this teleconference has been incorporated into this report.

#### 3.3 Limitations

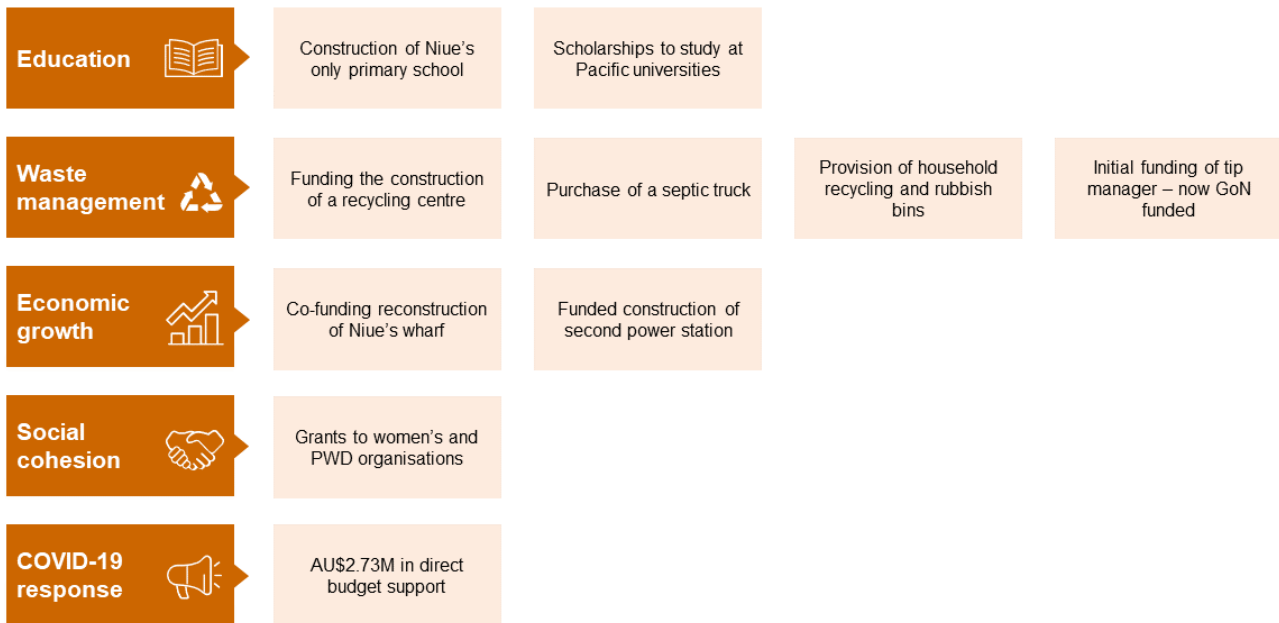
The evaluation did not involve in-person consultations due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. This reduced the number and type of consultations that could be undertaken, especially with community representatives. It also prevented the evaluation team from observational assessment of projects funded by Australia. Another limitation was the lack of formal documentation on the DCA, including activity designs, progress reports and evaluations. As described further below updates from MFAT to DFAT were generally provided verbally or via email. This limited the ability of the evaluation team to draw conclusions around the effectiveness and efficiency of Australian support through the DCA.

<sup>5</sup> The findings workshop was held on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May and included two DFAT staff at desk, the current HOM and the Chargé d'affaires.

## 4 Key findings

### 4.1 How has Australia’s development assistance through the DCA supported Niue’s development objectives in education, waste management, economic growth, and governance, and in its COVID-19 Response?

Australia’s development assistance through the DCA has **contributed to a range of achievements that align with Niue’s development objectives and Australia’s priorities** across education, waste management, economic growth, social cohesion, and Niue’s COVID-19 response (see the figure below).



### What outputs and outcomes has Australian contributed to through the DCA?

Australia has contributed to a **range of achievements across the DCA’s five priority areas.**<sup>6</sup>

#### Education

Along with MFAT, Australia co-funded the **construction of a new primary school** over 2014 to 2016. The previous school, located on Niue’s coast, was destroyed by a category five cyclone in 2005. The new school, relocated inland, was completed in 2016 and provides facilities for approximately 200 students and 17 teachers. It also serves as a natural disaster shelter for the community.<sup>7</sup> The primary school was highlighted by 11 interviewees as a key achievement of Australia’s funding through the DCA. Two interviewees noted that the school is well-equipped and an improvement on previous facilities. Australia has also provided **scholarships** through Australia Awards to study at Fiji University and the University of the South Pacific (USP). Currently, two teacher trainees are studying online at USP for two days and are undertaking placement at the high school for the other three days.

<sup>6</sup> No activities could be identified that contributed to governance and public health.

<sup>7</sup> DFAT, 2015/2016 Niue AQC.



## Waste

Australia has funded a **waste management project** with 10 components, including:

- The design of a **resource recovery centre** to improve Niue's capacity to recycle waste. This will reduce the impact of rubbish on Niue's land and water resources, in turn benefiting the tourism industry. The centre will start with collecting glass and plastic bottles, before expanding to other materials such as steel cans, aluminium cans, paper, cardboard, and E-waste.<sup>8</sup> There are no plans at this time to recycle the waste that will be stored at the centre. The centre was initially designed in 2017. However, MFAT found that the design was not adequate, and worked with the Niue Project Management and Coordination Unit (PMCU) to strengthen the design.<sup>9</sup> It is only in 2021 that a site has been identified and a contractor selected to start construction.
- The purchase of **recycling and rubbish bins** for all households across Niue (except for households in two villages). Three interviewees noted that these bins have supported households to better dispose waste, as previously some people were dumping rubbish on their land or at the side of the road. Recycling bins have also been provided to the primary school to support students to learn about recycling.
- Initially funding a **tip manager** with this now being fully funded by GoN. One interviewee noted that previously people dumped their rubbish anywhere at the tip. Now they are directed to dispose their rubbish within certain sections.
- The purchase of a **septic truck** which collects septic waste from household septic tanks.

## Economic growth and resilience

In response to COVID-19, Australia redirected AU\$2.5M of DCA funding to direct budget support for GoN. This funding was partially used to **co-fund the rebuilding of Niue's wharf** which was damaged during Tropical Cyclone Tino in 2020. This wharf is critical for enabling ships to dock and supply Niue with essential imported goods. The wharf is near completion. The remaining funds were used for the construction of a **second power station** in Niue, including purchasing two diesel generators.

## Social cohesion

The only activities related to social cohesion funded under the DCA were **grants** made through the Direct Aid Program (DAP) in 2021. These grants included funding for Niue's only disability inclusion organisation to develop learning materials, three sports projects which included funding for sports equipment, and funding for Niue Association of Women to improve their facilities.

## How well have outputs and outcomes aligned with Niue's development objectives and Australia's priorities?

The key achievements delivered through the DCA aligned with **Niue's development objectives and Australia's priorities**. Education and waste management were identified as focus areas under the DCA as they were priorities within the *Joint Commitment between New Zealand and Niue (2011-2014)*, which set out New Zealand and Niue's strategic development priorities. These focus areas were reconfirmed in bilateral talks between Australia and Niue in 2015 as ongoing priorities for Niue.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>8</sup> SPREP, *New Waste Initiatives For Niue On The Horizon*, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> DFAT, 2016/2017 Niue and Tokelau FAQC.

<sup>10</sup> DFAT, 2016/2017 Niue and Tokelau FAQC.

education and waste, as well as economic growth and social cohesion are included within the seven national development pillars outlined within the Niue National Strategic Plan (2016 to 2026), which sets out Niue's development priorities. This was supported by interviewees who noted that Australia's support was in line with Niue's development objectives. The waste management project is particularly important as ensuring that waste is appropriately managed is critical for protecting Niue's freshwater lens and marine environment, which in turn underpins Niue's ability to market itself as a tourist destination.

In terms of Australia's priorities, support for projects such as the redevelopment of the wharf and the construction of a second power station align with Australia's objective of promoting economic recovery – a key priority under *Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response*. While it is unsurprising that support through the DCA aligned with Niue and Australia's objectives, three MFAT and DFAT interviewees noted that agreeing priority activities with GoN has been difficult due to weak internal coordination on how to allocate funding between competing priorities within different departments. Nor is it clear if DFAT/MFAT had any frameworks/processes to prioritise activities within focus areas, such as a clear strategy, decision-making criteria, or research/analysis.

### How has GEDSI been considered in implementation and what outcomes have been achieved?

GEDSI was **not a discrete focus of the DCA**. Only two specific GEDSI activities can be identified from available evidence: DAP grants to disability and women's organisations described above. However, GEDSI was **considered in the design and implementation** of key activities:

- The school was designed to be accessible for people with disabilities (PWD). One GoN interviewee noted that this was a particular value of add of Australia and New Zealand's support, as disability inclusion can be overlooked in the design of new infrastructure.
- Women were actively involved in the design and construction of the school, including the Principal and most of the teaching staff.
- Consultation on the design of the resource recovery centre included female representatives from the tourism and private sectors.

While there is little data on GEDSI outcomes, such as improvements in education outcomes for PWD, Australian support for the primary school has **expanded education opportunities** for girls and PWD. Women are also encouraged to apply for the AAPS with one of two current awardees a woman – a high school trainee teacher.

Whether there should have been a greater focus on GEDSI during the DCA or indeed if it should be a focus going forward, elicited **mixed perspectives** among interviewees. Three interviewees (including two GoN interviewees – one male and one female) noted that gender equality is not as pressing an issue as in other Pacific Islands. However, a 2015 stocktake by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, found that there are still strong gender stereotypes as to what constitutes women's and men's roles.<sup>11</sup> There are also still pressing policy reforms. For example, the Family Law Bill which seeks to address violence against women has still not been tabled in Parliament.<sup>12</sup> While there is less information on the status of disability inclusion within Niue, two DFAT interviewees did note that there appears to be little to no provision for special needs education. As part of the scoping of Australia's aid program, **more consultations** may be required to better understand GEDSI issues and priority needs.

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<sup>11</sup> SPC, Stocktake of the Gender Mainstreaming Capacity of Pacific Island Governments: Niue, 2015, found in DFAT, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development: Niue Aid Activities Summary, [Aid Fact Sheet - aqua - single column \(pacificwomen.org\)](#).

<sup>12</sup> TVNiue, Challenges Issued as the National Council of Women Celebrate International Women's Day, 2021, [Challenges issued as the National Council of Women celebrate International Women's Day – Television Niue \(tvniue.com\)](#)

## How well were value for money principles incorporated in procurement, contracting and implementation decision-making?

While the DCA has been an efficient modality (see sub-KEQ below), the lack of documentation makes it **difficult to determine how well value for money (VfM) principles** were incorporated into programming. For example, it is not clear the extent to which cost consciousness or competition were encouraged in procurement and contracting. Nevertheless, from the available evidence, **VfM was promoted** in several ways over the period of the DCA, including: partnering with MFAT to co-fund the design and construction of the school; using local labour in infrastructure projects which reduced costs relative to using international labour and generated income for Niueans; partnering with MFAT for the delivery of AAPS with MFAT's locally engaged staff-member providing in-country support to both Australian and New Zealand scholarship awardees; and regular engagement between DFAT Canberra and New Zealand High Commission in Niue to discuss progress and risks.

There were however **challenges** which limited VfM. A lengthy land dispute between GoN and local landowners resulted in the school's construction being delayed by 12 months and a resulting increase in the total cost by NZ\$1.2 million.<sup>13</sup> The delay in the construction of the resource recovery centre was due in part to the need to revise the initial design and the fact that this was the first time the PMCU had managed the procurement of such a project. However, this delay was counterbalanced by the opportunity to strengthen the capacity of the PMCU and build GoN ownership of the centre.<sup>14</sup> There have also **been delays in the disbursement of funding through the DCA** with an MFAT interviewee noting that at one point close to five million in DCA funding had accumulated in the trust account. Furthermore, funding for the 20/21 period had not been disbursed at the time of this review. Delays in disbursement are likely due to GoN's difficulties in identifying priority activities.

## Have the program's governance and implementation arrangements (DCA) been appropriate and proportionate to the outcomes sought?

In the absence of an in-country presence, the DCA has been an **appropriate modality** for progressing Australia's development objectives in Niue. The DCA enabled Australia to leverage New Zealand's deep political and development ties/contextual understanding, in-country staff, and larger aid budget (approximately NZ\$20M a year). The arrangement also ensured that Australia's support aligned with Niue's largest donor. The alternatives to the DCA were **less appropriate**. Using a managing contractor to deliver development assistance would have been more expensive, as they would have set-up costs and higher management fees compared to MFAT, reducing the amount of development assistance available. A managing contractor would have also needed time to develop local networks and an understanding of the context, reducing at least in the early stages the effectiveness of the development program. Alternatively, funding could have been provided directly to the GoN. This would have entailed a higher-level of risk without an in-country presence to work with GoN to ensure it meet GoA fiduciary requirements, monitor implementation, and coordinate additional assistance to address GoN capacity gaps.<sup>15</sup>

The DCA's governance and implementation arrangements were **also generally proportionate**. MFAT and DFAT interviewees noted that there was an appropriate level of engagement to discuss priorities and progress of key activities. This engagement was often informal in nature, such as regular calls or emails. DFAT interviewees also noted that the in-country implementation by MFAT staff not only reduced costs, but enabled DFAT to focus on New Zealand, which is the priority of the New Zealand and Realm Countries Section. However, one MFAT interviewee did note that the DCA added a work-load burden, as

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<sup>13</sup> DFAT, 2015/2016 AQC.

<sup>14</sup> DFAT, 2015/2016 AQC.

<sup>15</sup> DFAT, 2015/2016 AQC.

no additional staff were hired to oversee the implementation of Australian DCA activities. While MFAT did receive an annual management fee of 5% (AU\$70,000), it is not clear what this fee was used for. In terms of progress reporting, while the lack of formal reporting reduced management burden, it also limited Australia's ability to report on the DCA's key achievements.

### **How sustainable are the results and what is the ownership of results among stakeholders, in particular community beneficiaries?**

The key achievements of the DCA appear to be **generally sustainable**. The school and septic truck are both still in use. In the case of the school, three Niuean interviewees noted that there was effective engagement of teachers, government and wider community in the design and construction of the school, which has resulted in strong public ownership. Due in part to the lack of reporting, sustainability is less clear in the case of other achievements, such as the extent to which households are using their bins or the extent to which AAPS graduates have gained employment. However, three interviewees noted that there is improved waste management, including households using the recycling and rubbish bins and waste being disposed appropriately at the tip.

In the case of more recent achievements/ongoing activities, such as the wharf's redevelopment, the diesel generators, and the resource centre, these are **likely to be sustainable** as they are priorities of GoN (generators and wharf redevelopment were directly identified by GoN), meet the needs of the tourism industry (Niue's primary source of income prior to and likely after the pandemic), and the design and implementation process has been primarily driven by GoN (PMCU with MFAT support led the design and procurement of the resource centre).

### **To what extent has Australia's assistance been visible, and do beneficiaries understand Australia's role in providing support through the DCA?**

As MFAT delivered Australian assistance through the DCA, Australia's role **was not always visible**. One GoN interviewee noted that there was often an assumption that funding for DCA-funded initiatives was from New Zealand. The exceptions were the school and septic truck as they had a plaque and Australian logo respectively. Visibility of Australia's role **improved with the arrival of the HOM**. Five interviewees noted that the HOM has been actively "getting out in the community" and is now a well-known figure. This is reflected in media stories of the HOM discussing Australia's development assistance, including the provision of the household bins and the construction of a second power station.<sup>16</sup> Four interviewees did note that Australia could **continue to improve** its public communications: *"Australian funding has really made an impact...it has enabled a more thorough approach to waste management...Australia really undersells how important this initiative has been (MFAT interviewee)."*

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<sup>16</sup> See Annex 1 for list of TVNiue articles.

## Annex 1: List of documents reviewed

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8. DFAT, Australian Aid to the Philippines, 2012.
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34. Rosina Watson and Etienne Nel, Applying Development Models to Small Island States: Is Niue a TOURAB Country?, 2020.
35. SPC, Stocktake of the Gender Mainstreaming Capacity of Pacific Island Governments: Niue, 2015, found in DFAT, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development: Niue Aid Activities Summary, [Aid Fact Sheet - aqua - single column \(pacificwomen.org\)](#).
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