

## MEDIA RELEASE

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# NEW ZEALAND ARCHIVISTS CLEANING UP IN NIUE

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Repairing government records used as shelter during Cyclone Heta in 2004 is a challenge facing a team of New Zealand archivists who are heading to the Island of Niue on Friday 6 June.

Trish McCormack, the project leader and an archivist at Archives New Zealand Wellington, says, “we will be picking up on work started when we visited Niue last year. This involves listing and repairing files that were damaged by the cyclone. One of our biggest challenges will be repairing files that had been used as blankets by people who had taken refuge in the Niue National Archives during the cyclone. These files are ripped and torn and badly in need of repair.”

She says the files include the Resident Commissioners files dating back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and records of New Zealand’s involvement in Niue governance. There are also personal records of Niue people, such as land ownership, education, health and justice.

Last year the project team of Trish McCormack, Aaron Braden, archivist in Archives New Zealand’s Dunedin Regional Office and Tharon Bloomfield, conservator at the National Preservation Office, National Library of New Zealand, spent two weeks in Niue and were faced with over 3500 files to archive. “These documents had been damaged by the cyclone and harsh conditions,” Trish says. “We managed to list and box about half the records held at Niue’s National Archives, approximately 250 boxes.”

Kylie Ngaropo, community archivist, Archives New Zealand and descendant of Te Rawawa, Tuhoe, Ngati Porou and Ngati Kahungunu, joins the project team for this latest visit.

Trish says the team’s expertise in small community archives is of great value to the work being carried out. Trish is from the West Coast and Aaron is from Arrowtown. Kylie is drawing heavily on her experiences working with Māori communities, with particular interest in cultural aspects. She says this is an opportunity to see how disaster recovery works and feed this knowledge back into our communities.

This is Tharon’s third trip to Niue. He was one of two New Zealanders who led the disaster recovery in 2004 and has provided a valuable contribution to the restoration of the Niue archives.

The project is funded by NZ AID, the International Aid branch of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade. This project is one of the ways in New Zealand’s culture and heritage sector is helping its smaller Pacific neighbours with long-term preservation of their nation’s records in safe and secure environments.

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