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*The Pacific environment, sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.*

## Twenty Eighth SPREP Meeting of Officials

Apia, Samoa

19 – 21<sup>st</sup> September 2017

### Agenda Item 6.8.2: SPREP and University of Newcastle, Australia UON) Partnership

#### Purpose

1. To present the Meeting with a short summary on the developing partnership between SPREP and the University of Newcastle, Australia (UON) and other regional partners including the University of the South Pacific (USP).

#### Background

2. UON is a regional Australian University with almost 40,000 students that has a strong record in applied research and industry led solutions. UON is ranked in the top 1% of universities worldwide<sup>1</sup> with research excellence in key the fields of:
  - science and engineering
  - energy and environment
  - health and medicine
3. UON is recognised by government and industry in Australia for its innovative model of regionally relevant research and research education delivered by the Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources (NIER), whose focus has expanded to include dedicated international nodes in Asia and India. UON is working with partners across the world to build equitable prosperity, social cohesion and healthy communities. Of critical importance is ensuring that UON's nearest neighbours, the Pacific Islands, are supported in the face of significant environment, social and economic challenges. UON has more than twenty global and national research centres focused on areas of mutual interest with SPREP (Attachment A).
4. Following fruitful discussions between SPREP and UON in 2015/2016 on areas of benefit to the Pacific environment, a joint MOU (Attachment B) was signed during the Clean Pacific Roundtable in Suva, Fiji in July 2016.
5. The principle aims of the partnership are to:
  - Bring further resources to the Pacific Island countries and territories through improving capacity via partnership programs with SPREP with regional universities (USP) and national educational entities and research agencies;

<sup>1</sup> QS World University Rankings 2017/18

- Deliver research impact through regionally relevant programs specific to environmental protection in the Pacific context, such as the provision of resources for the establishment of a dedicated Pacific Innovation Hub and PHD Program; and,
- Utilise specialist expertise within UON to identify and develop joint project proposals that translate the capacity improvements made through research into enterprise opportunities, bringing more resources and jobs into the Pacific.

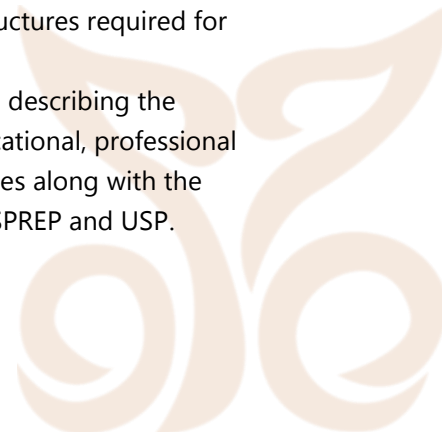
## **Current Situation**

### **Green Waste Research**

6. In moving forward with the MOU, SPREP and UON have jointly launched research into deriving energy and agricultural products from organic and green waste streams generated through disaster events using in-house expertise as well as that from industry partners (Attachment C) under the EU funded PacWaste project.
7. This research has the potential to provide critical links to develop waste projects linked to agriculture, energy and health sectors as well as other environmental components (biodiversity, climate change) through the identification of viable resource recovery from organic waste streams that are currently underutilised or contribute to adverse environmental impacts that can be piloted under new project funding.

### **Capacity Building, Research and Enterprise Development**

8. Further planning has also been conducted by SPREP and UON to progress the MOU agreement to improve capacity, research and enterprise development in Pacific Island countries, territories and institutions through articulating priority projects and developing a Research Roadmap for a regionally relevant, embedded research and a research education cell in the Pacific.
9. As a component of this partnership, UON is contributing funding for five PhD scholarships (for Pacific Island applicants) and a Postdoctoral Research Coordinator, to be posted at the SPREP Campus. These components have a combined approximate value of AUD 1 million.
10. USP has provided in-principle support for a jointly badged PhD Scholarship Programme with Scholarship recipients graduating from both USP and UON.
11. The Research Roadmap will articulate priorities, partners and potential donors to increase funding and capture and achieve outcomes with impact. Key objectives of the Roadmap are to:
  - Identify strategic project areas;
  - Map a framework for PhD supervision and identify support structures required for Postdoctoral Coordinator and PhD Scholars at SPREP; and,
  - Provide the overarching strategy for regional capacity building describing the transference of knowledge to skills and enterprise through vocational, professional training pathways such as doctoral training and modular courses along with the establishment of innovation centres/hubs in partnership with SPREP and USP.



### Next Steps

12. A number of steps are now underway to formalise the establishment of the Pacific PhD Programme as part of the Pacific Innovation Hub. This includes the development of the Research Roadmap and a return visit to SPREP by UON Senior Executives to present and ratify the Roadmap in September, 2017.
13. During this visit, a Pacific Innovation Hub Partner Exchange Forum is proposed with SPREP and USP to provide opportunities to build strategic linkages to partners' priority areas.

### Recommendations

14. The Meeting is invited to:
  - **note** the summary on the developing partnership between SPREP and the University of Newcastle, Australia.

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15 August, 2017

