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A judicial training workshop is under way in Rarotonga under the auspices of the Pacific Judicial Development Programme, which is funded by the New Zealand and Australian governments. Enoka Puni, a former judge of Samoa now based in New Zealand, who has worked on the Programme for the past 8 years, will run the workshop from 11 to 15 May at the Ministry of Justice.

"The need for good calibre people on the bench, whether at lay magistrate level or otherwise, is always a high priority for any country," said Tia Barrett, the New Zealand High Commissioner who formally opened the Workshop on Monday 11 May.

Good governance and the rule of law require solid policing and a competent and independent judiciary. It was in recognition of these essential elements of democratic rule that the New Zealand and Australian governments funded the Pacific Judicial Development Programme from 2005.

Barrett said one of the key components for the Programme is to strengthen national institutions to deliver professional education and skills development to judges, magistrates, lay magistrates and court officers. The second main component is to strengthen independence of the judiciary in the Pacific, and the judicial and court systems and processes that they use.

"The schedule for the week is a busy one and is a great opportunity for the Justices of the Peace who sit on the bench in Rarotonga to refresh their knowledge of court procedures and decision-making," Barrett remarked.

Barrett congratulated the JPs for the important work they do for the Cook Islands, and acknowledged John Kenning, Chief Justice of the Peace, for his role in ensuring the smooth functioning of the bench. "The Cook Islands is well served by the judiciary's commitment and dedication to this essential function in society," Barrett concluded.

NZHC media release

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