



Cook Islands and Kiingitanga reaffirm enduring relationship at Tūrangawaewae

The Cook Islands has reaffirmed its enduring relationship with the Kiingitanga following Prime Minister Hon. Mark Brown's attendance at the 130th Tūrangawaewae Royal Regatta.

Prime Minister Brown, accompanied by Te Kaumaitinui, was formally hosted by Te Arikinui Kuini Nga wai hono i te po at Tūrangawaewae Marae in Ngāruawāhia, alongside Waikato-Tainui and leaders from across New Zealand and the region.

"We came together not only to honour tradition, but to look ahead at how we strengthen our relationship for future generations."

The visit sits within the longstanding relationship between the Government of the Cook Islands and the Kiingitanga, formally recognised through the Kororomotu/Kawenata signed in 2015.

That agreement affirms a mana-ki-te-mana partnership grounded in shared values including rangatiratanga, kotahitanga, manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga, and commits both parties to ongoing cooperation across cultural, social, environmental and economic areas of mutual interest.

Prime Minister Brown said the engagement reflected that living relationship in action.

"The Kawenata is a commitment between our peoples. It reflects who we are, where we come from, and how we move forward together."

At this year's Regatta, Te Arikinui Kuini Nga wai hono i te po issued a clear call to action, urging leaders and communities to restore the balance between meeting the needs of people and restoring the health of te taiao, which is under increasing pressure.

She reminded those gathered that the natural world speaks through rivers, land, winds and oceans, and that it is time to listen. Drawing on the wisdom of her tūpuna, she encouraged people to embrace change and respond with purpose.

The Prime Minister acknowledged this message as one that resonates strongly across the Cook Islands and the wider Pacific.

“This call reflects what we know as guardians of our Marae Moana. Our environment is not separate from us. It sustains us, and it calls on us to act.”

The 2026 Regatta placed a strong focus on climate resilience, bringing together leaders committed to advancing practical responses for communities across New Zealand and the Pacific.

“As a large ocean state and indigenous peoples, we carry shared responsibilities to protect our environment and to support our communities to adapt and thrive.”

The Prime Minister acknowledged the leadership of Te Arikinui and the Kiingitanga in creating space for connection and ongoing partnership.

“I acknowledge Te Arikinui for her leadership and for the way she brings people together with clarity and intent. There is a clear opportunity for us to continue building on this relationship.”

Discussions during the visit also signalled a shared interest in continuing dialogue on how the Kawenata may evolve to reflect current priorities and opportunities.

“We leave here with a clear understanding that our relationship remains strong, and that there is more we can do together.

For media enquiries please contact annique.davis@cookislands.gov.ck

