

Visit by the High Commissioner for the Kingdom of Tonga

In late September I hosted the First Official visit to Western Australia by His Royal Highness the Crown Prince Tupouto'a-Lavaka, High Commissioner for the Kingdom of Tonga.

His Royal Highness was accompanied by the First Secretary, Mr Leonaiasi Kuluni. The Kingdom of Tonga is an archipelago of 176 islands lying south of Samoa in the South Pacific Ocean. It is the sole constitutional monarchy in the Pacific and the only islander country which has not been formally colonised.

The visit by Prince Tupouto'a-Lavaka was an excellent chance to learn more about Tonga and the country's culture and lifestyle. It was interesting to learn that Tonga provides free and mandatory education for all children and foreign-funded scholarships for post-secondary education. The Prince also highlighted that Tongans also have access to a national health care system, which is great for a population of only 104,000! I was interested to learn more about the Tongan Constitution and the Prince described the pro-democracy movement in Tonga which promotes reforms, including better representation in the Parliament for the majority commoners and better accountability in matters of the State.

It was interesting to learn that the Prince studied in Australia and holds two Masters Degrees - in Defence Studies from the University of New South Wales and International Relations from Bond University. He is a graduate of the Australian Joint Services Staff College and the United States Naval War College. While he is based in Canberra, the High Commissioner is also responsible for representing his nation in Malaysia, Brunei, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Indonesia, Japan, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates.

The HRH also met with the Governor of WA, and the Deputy Lord Mayor of the City of Perth, and given an economic briefing on Western Australia by the Department of State Development.



Picture: (from left) Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Mr Michael Sutherland, HRH the Crown Prince Tupouto'a-Lavaka, and the President, the Hon. Barry House.