



## Economic Development Strategy: Access to opportunities

The Economic Development Strategy outlines where we want our economy to be in ten years. An economy where we work together to build a dynamic, prosperous and inclusive future. An economy that works in harmony with our culture and environment. The Strategy looks at cross-cutting economic issues impacting our Islands, and the challenges and opportunities that we face over the next decade. It provides an outline of the actions we will take to create and set a stronger economic and fiscal foundation for our country.

### Objective 1: Improving equity & access for all

One of the objectives of the Economic Development Strategy 2030 is to improve equity and access for all. We want to build a future where every Cook Islander has equal access to basic services and economic opportunities. This means a more inclusive society that treats everybody equally, and a better quality of life for everyone, not just those that can afford it.

To do this, we want to improve our welfare system, create better access to land and housing, and increase the minimum wage. On the Pa Enea, this will be done through reducing the cost of living, improving shipping and air services, and creating better telecommunication, health, education and business services.

Addressing the unequal distribution of access to economic opportunities and services improves equity, leading to better growth prospects and a more stable economy

#### Everyone gets access to the economy

“Every dollar you spend from your wages and salaries is helping someone else. It's somebody else's income, who then takes that to pay wages and expenses and hopefully make a profit,” says BCI's Customer Services Manager Ron Patia. When you purchase furniture, whiteware or a motor vehicle, build a new house or create a business you are contributing to our economy. “You're contributing to our businesses, car yard companies, airline service, hardware stores for the purchase of materials, pay wages for builders and their workers and so forth. All that money is going back into the economy for growth.”

### Have your say

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) is seeking feedback on the draft strategy by 11 December 2020. Please provide your comments on the draft Strategy:

- online through a short survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SHY6MH5>
- by mail at PO Box 120, Avarua
- by email at MFEM.economics@cookislands.gov.ck, or
- in person at Level 1, MFEM Building, Avarua.





How will the Strategy improve equity & access?

What does this mean in practice?

**Improving equity across the Cook Islands**

**Improving the Government’s welfare system**

Sustainable development needs a national welfare safety net – welfare payments and other programs that protect those disadvantaged members of our community that need support from time to time.

More work to refine the Government’s current welfare system to make it clearer and simpler for Cook Islanders that need to access help.

**Better access to land & housing**

Home ownership is a stepping stone to creating family wealth and an improved quality of life. Access to affordable housing is also important for those without land.

A review of the Government’s provision of housing for low-income families in Rarotonga, and a review of the current Cook Islands land tenure system.

**Minimum wage reform**

The Cook Islands minimum wage, mandated by law, plays a central role in the Government’s efforts to overcome poverty and reduce inequality.

Updating, refining and setting a clearer objective for the Government’s current minimum wage policy, based on a robust methodology.

**A more equitable Pa Enea**

**Reducing the cost of living**

The basic cost of living in the Pa Enea is higher than Rarotonga, largely due to higher prices.

A review of grocery prices by the Price Tribunal to better understand the reasons for high prices and inform Government response.

**Improving transport services**

Frequent, safe, reliable and affordable shipping and air services to the Pa Enea are critical for economic development and access to services.

Finalisation and implementation of the Government’s Shipping Roadmap to improve shipping services and establishment of a Pa Enea Air Discount Scheme to deliver lower air fares for the residents of Cook Islands remote communities.

**Better telecommunication, health, education and small business services**

Access to key services – healthcare, education, telecommunication – ensures that individuals, businesses and communities have the opportunity to invest & grow.

Better-quality telecommunications services under the Universal Access Plan, continued operation of the Kaveinga Ora flying doctors and dentists’ program, more support for Pa Enea students, including secondary student accommodation in Rarotonga.

‘The economic strategy for the Cook Islands needs to be inclusive of all of our islands.’

Participant, Economic Development Conference

‘Improving telecommunications will help keep children on our island longer.’

Participant, Atiu consultation

