

8 January 2019

**NEWS RELEASE**  
**NEW DRAFT SEABED MINERALS BILL**

The new draft Seabed Minerals Bill was released recently for feedback following seabed minerals consultations in Rarotonga and the Outer Islands last year.

Further consultations will be happening over the next 2 months to receive feedback from our communities on this new draft Bill and other seabed minerals related issues. Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Mark Brown, whose portfolio includes Natural Resources and Minerals, has been leading the consultations with his team including representatives from the Seabed Minerals Authority, Marae Moana, Cook Islands Investment Corporation and the Crown Law Office.

The Honourable Mark Brown, said, *"I am pleased to see our comprehensive schedule of consultations is going well. These started in October and will carry on throughout January and February, to gain comment and feedback on numerous issues including the draft Seabed Minerals Bill which was released prior to Christmas"*.

The Seabed Minerals Bill was passed in 2009 but has recently been amended to reflect current best practice and the principles contained in the Marae Moana Act, which was passed in 2017. The new draft Seabed Minerals Bill 2019, which was drafted with legal assistance from the Commonwealth Secretariat and New Zealand Parliamentary Council Office, proposes other changes, including some required amendments to the Environment Act 2003 and the creation of a new committee that can help consultations between the community and the Seabed Minerals Authority.

A comprehensive tentative Consultations schedule for January 2019 is published on the Seabed Minerals Authority's website ([www.seabedmineralsauthority.gov.ck](http://www.seabedmineralsauthority.gov.ck)) and will be broadcast through local media and on social media in coming weeks. The schedule includes consultations with the Opposition, Marae Moana, aronga mana, environmental NGOs, community information sessions, public consultations in Rarotonga, Nga-pu-toru, Aitutaki, Minihiki and Rakahanga and consultations with industry.

The draft Seabed Minerals Bill is available at [www.seabedmineralsauthority.gov.ck](http://www.seabedmineralsauthority.gov.ck) or by email from the Seabed Minerals Authority in Avarua. Feedback can be submitted through the following channels: email [info@seabedmineralsauthority.gov.ck](mailto:info@seabedmineralsauthority.gov.ck) or [crownlaw.office@cookislands.gov.ck](mailto:crownlaw.office@cookislands.gov.ck) or post (PO Box 733, Avarua or PO Box 494, Avarua).

The deadline to submit feedback is Wednesday, 6 February, though the conversation about seabed minerals activity is ongoing and members of the public are encouraged to feel free to continue providing feedback beyond this date.

A finalised version of the bill, will be shared via a public meeting on Friday, 22 February 2019.

Drafts of new Strategy and Policy documents to guide seabed minerals sector into the future will be released to the public shortly for comment. In both documents, effective engagement with the community is defined as a key priority.

END-Release