

# **1. GENERAL INFORMATION**

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## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This report contains the final results of the 2001 Census of Population and Dwellings undertaken on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2001. This census was conducted under the authority of the Statistics Act, 1966. The confidentiality provisions in this act provide against the release or publication of any particulars relating to individuals.

This is the seventh census undertaken by the Statistics Office, the first being in 1971. Prior to this the Cook Island censuses were conducted by the Registrar General of the Justice Department. Since the annexation of the Cook Islands by New Zealand regular census activities have been held every five years. The census counts all persons present in the Cook Islands on census night, thus it includes visitors temporary in the country. Cook Islanders who are living or are temporarily on vacation abroad are excluded.

The theme of the 2001 Census was “*BE IN THE COUNT*”. This theme followed on from that of the 1996 “*COUNTING FOR OUR FUTURE*” where it encourages everyone to participate in the census for better and reliable result.

## **1.2 SETTING**

The self-governing territory of the Cook Islands consists of 15 islands and atolls that are spread over 2million sq. km of the South Pacific Ocean. The Cook Islands is defined as all the islands between 156 - 167 ° West and 8-23 ° South. Such distances over the sea linking small populations’ presents an imposing hindrance to the development of an efficient transportation and communication system.

The islands are geographically divided into two groups, commonly referred to as the Northern and Southern Group islands. The two groups of islands making up the country portray marked differences in their social, cultural and economic activities. The Northern Group islands remain relatively isolated from the Southern Group islands.

The Cook Islands are the result of volcanic activity and coral growth. The islands of Rarotonga, Mangaia, Atiu, Mauke and Mitiaro are the emergent peaks of extinct volcanoes. The islands of Manuae, Palmerston, Penrhyn, Manihiki, Rakahanga, Pukapuka, Nassau and Suwarrow are atolls, that is coral reefs around a lagoon on the top of submerged volcanoes. Aitutaki is part volcano and part atoll.

The total land area of the Cook Islands is 23,261 hectares while its exclusive economic zone covers an area of nearly 2 million sq. km or 750,000 sq. miles. Rarotonga, with a

total land area of 6,719 hectares is the largest and most populous island (over 50% of the population) and also the administrative centre.

The Cook Islands enjoy a South Pacific moderate climate. The mean monthly minimum and maximum temperatures in Rarotonga, the capital, range between 21° and 28° Celsius. Trade winds blow almost continuously.

Rainfall is normally spread evenly throughout the year but there is considerable variation from year to year. The islands lie within the hurricane belt and severe damage to crops, housing and coastal areas (harbours) can be expected once or twice each decade. The hurricane season lasts from November to March during which time storms of less than hurricane strength may also inflict minor damage to the islands.

### Map of the Cook Islands

