



Govt has cheaper net cable solution: Brown

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GOVERNMENT has found a more cost-effective solution than the new Hawaiki cable project to provide the Cook Islands with a link to an undersea telecommunications cable.

Finance and Telecommunications minister Mark Brown says the new solution will involve constructing a separate cable with a connection via Samoa and linking to the proposed \$80 million Tui Samoa Submarine Cable, which will in turn link Apia in Samoa with Fiji and the existing Southern Cross submarine cable.

Brown says the Cook Islands government has been involved in talks with the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, OPT French Polynesia and Niue on alternatives for a telecommunications cable solution for Niue, Cook Islands and alternative cable for French Polynesia.

He was replying to questions from CI News following a story published on the Stuff website that said the Cook Islands and Niue were missing from the latest map showing the route the new Hawaiki undersea cable will take.

The latest route map indicates the Cook Islands has missed out on New Zealand government funding to install links to this country, contradicting a New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) announcement in February, that efforts would be made to improve internet connectivity to the Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau and French Polynesia.

However, Brown says that in February this year, "three identified possible providers," including Hawaiki were asked to submit proposals to MFAT.

"Given that the procurement process is still underway with negotiations, not much information can be divulged as this is still confidential (from a commercial point of view).

"IT IS true that the Cook Islands and Niue are not on the Hawaiki cable, as an alternative more cost-effective solution was identified.

"But rest assured, government, together with the other parties, is working towards concluding the procurement and contractual processes for a submarine cable running from Apia to Papeete with spurs to Niue, Rarotonga, Aitutaki and Bora Bora. "It is hoped that the

contract negotiations can be concluded, if all goes well, before the end of this year. It anticipated the cable will go live by the end of 2018." The solution involving Niue and French Polynesia will help share the cost of the cable, Brown says. "New Zealand has committed to a third of our portion of the cost and we are working securing the balance of our costs with ADB, and potentially other partners.

"The cable will completely change our telecommunications sector with much more capacity, speed, reliability. This will have tremendous flow-on effects for our businesses, ordinary users, education, health and other sectors."

Source:

<http://www.cookislandsnews.com/national/local/item/61396-govt-has-cheaper-net-cable-solution-brown>