



Australia ICOMOS Secretariat  
 Ph: +61 3 9251 7131  
 austicomos@deakin.edu.au  
 www.icomos.org/australia

## CONFERENCE PAPER ABSTRACT

<b>NAME OF PRESENTER:</b>	<b>Semisi Tongia</b>
<b>TITLE OF PAPER:</b>	<b>Post Disaster Needs after Cyclone Gita (February 2018) Report on Cultural Heritage Sites and Buildings in Tonga</b>
<b>THEME:</b>	<i>Theme 1: Heritage at Risk – Climate Change and Disasters</i>
<p><b>PAPER ABSTRACT:</b></p> <p><i>This paper assesses the impacts of Cyclone Gita on Tonga World Heritage Tentative Lists - Ha'amonga 'a Maui Trilithon at Niutoua and the Ancient Royal Tombs at Lapaha. The damages sustained to the Heritage Sites were considered moderate, while there are several landmarks suffered severe damages – for example the Parliament House. Built in 1892 and venue for many historical events, was completely demolished by Cyclone Gita.</i></p> <p><i>Overall, the assessment shows the vulnerability of the Heritage Sites to natural phenomenon. The fact that there is a lack of cultural legislation for protection and safeguarding heritage sites, assessment of cultural heritage sites post-disaster is often forgotten in the assessment process, limited capacity in disaster response activities and the lack of awareness of the uniqueness of our culture value has made the impacts even more worst. However, the demolition of the Parliament House by Cyclone Gita (12 February 2018) provided the opportunity for nation-wide reflection and debate over the value of historic/heritage sites at both government and community levels.</i></p>	
<p><b>BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRESENTER:</b></p> <p><i>Semisi Tongia is the focal person for Tonga Heritage. He has been in the Ministry of Tourism, Culture Division since 2015. A graduate of Victoria University of Wellington in 1998, he mostly worked as consultant at the education sector, environment and health. His current interests in culture sprang from his years of experience at education sector, where he witnessed the erosion of local cultures, languages and lack of attention from authorities to culture.</i></p>	