

China contract 'disappoints' DPM

DEPUTY prime minister Mark Brown says it's disappointing the Cook Islands government entered into a contract with the Chinese contractor for the Te Mato Vai stage one project.

The surprise comment came during an interview with Radio New Zealand in which Brown discussed aspects of the controversial water project.

The costs for the project were initially estimated to be \$60 million but have since blown out to \$90 million. Officials have told

the CI News this initial figure was "wrongly promoted" and they say Te Mato Vai was always going to cost \$90 million.

China Civil Engineering and Construction Company (CCECC) delivered the stage one project which cost the Cook Islands \$25 million. This project involved replacing the inner and outer ring mains and cross mains, then connecting the new ring mains to the rest of the existing pipe network.

However the government

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is not satisfied with the work done by CCECC and has asked the company to replace about 17kms of the pipework it has laid around the island.

CCECC is unwilling to do the remedial work, leaving the country with an extra \$13 mil-

told RNZ.

"We are doing that right now through the legal process that is available to us, but yes it is disappointing that we entered into this contract with CCECC.

"They haven't delivered to the standards we wanted in terms of some of the fixtures, the joints and the pipeline and we want to make sure those are fixed and remediated as soon as possible."

Brown also said the CCECC have no more involvement in

the country after completing stage one project two years ago. When asked if he would have them back to do further projects, he replied there were no plans at this stage to have CCECC back to do any work in the Cook Islands.

"Their last project was the Nikao School project which was opened earlier on this year, so there is no further work involved with that particular contractor here in the Cook Islands."

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