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Editor’s Introduction

Australia and the Pacific—the Next 20 Years

Max Quanchi

Charting Two Decades of Change in the Pacific

In July 1989, Social Alternatives published a special issue on Australia and the South Pacific, subtitled ‘Trouble in Paradise’. In 1989, ‘trouble’ seemed to be an appropriate label, with two recent coups in Fiji, an uneasy truce in New Caledonia between Kanaks, French settlers and the French State, and a long civil war about to break out on Bougainville Island. In the preceding decade, the Solomon Islands, FSM, Marshalls, CNMI, Vanuatu, Tuvalu and Kiribati had joined the already independent nations of Samoa, Tonga, Fiji and Papua New Guinea. In the 1989 issue, thirteen analysts tackled labour, land, unions, reform, technology and security. The editorial claimed Australians ‘have urgent economic and political interests and concerns on our very doorstep’ and Senator John Button suggested a move has been made towards establishing ‘Australia’s partnership in the South Pacific’. Instead, the 1990s was an era when three catchphrases dominated Australian thinking on the newly independent nations of the region – arc of instability, doomsday scenario and failed states.

Twenty years later, the Pacific Islands Forum, comprising the leaders of all independent Pacific nations (plus Australia and New Zealand), met for the second time in Australia, in Cairns, for its annual regional meetings. This Social Alternatives special issue of the Pacific has a much different tone because Australia now faces eastwards towards a dynamic region and one that requires a new set of parameters, paradigms and perceptions. The turning point was Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s Port Moresby Declaration in March 2008, and subsequent statements at the 2020 Summit. He called for public acknowledgement and understanding of Australia’s deep engagement with the Pacific Islands, and a new era of cooperation and partnership. This was a welcome change. This new relationship, symbolised in 2007 in the appointment of two Parliamentary Secretaries, one for the Pacific Islands and one for International Development Assistance, has taken concrete shape in the last two years and the essays below now tackle, for example, Australia’s involvement in the regional Pacific Plan for development, a new Guest Worker scheme, and regional responses to climate change.

However, there is still a lot of talk – talkfests – and many observers note that considerable energy is expended on planning in the Pacific without much in the way of actual implementation and progress. Russell Hunter in the Samoa Observer (8 Aug 2009) noted sarcastically ‘we are rather good at planning in this part of the world’ and rhetorically asked what the Cairns meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum did – ‘well, it plans of course’. In a specific example, David Robie noted that train-the-trainer programs in journalism rarely had the desired outcome, citing research by Konai Helu Thaman that not one person had completed a train-the-trainer program and gone home to apply those skills in journalism programs in their local Pacific universities where journalism was taught. Faced with a long list of regional and international conferences, workshops and symposia, Russell Hunter had asked – ‘How does all this effort benefit the people of the region?’

Talkfests

The outcomes or benefits of a workshop and conference system were highlighted in 2008 when the University of Papua New Guinea revived the Waigani Seminars. Three hundred academics, practitioners and interested observers conducted a three day introspective analysis of plans laid out at independence in 1975, and asked why, after thirty-three years, Papua New Guinea (PNG) had not achieved these goals. The ‘talk’ over the previous thirty years at Waigani Seminars, a series which had begun in 1967, suggests that PNG had confronted recurring levels of intensity and change in the political,
economic and social domain, and that a sense of being overwhelmed was real. But, at the Waigani talk-fests, it was claimed these problems were being challenged with enthusiasm and confidence.

The first series of annual Waigani Seminars at the University of Papua New Guinea from 1967 to 1997 were well attended (often up to 400 people) and it was claimed they stayed well clear of being a 'dull and highly academic affair' (Waddell 1998, 113). The Seminars were said after six years to have 'opened up debate on such development problems as land, education, population, agriculture, politics and administration (Hegarty 1972, 164). The foundation Professor of History and later Vice-Chancellor of UPNG, Ken Inglis, described some speakers at the Priorities in Melanesian Development seminar in 1972, especially those from overseas, as electrifying (Standish 1982, 370-1; May 1982, 437).

The six Waigani seminars worth mentioning were:

- In 1970; a breakthrough in the development of nationalist politics
- in 1972; a challenge to conventional, colonial notions of development.
- in 1973; a turning point in Australia-TPNG relations when the Australian Minister responsible for TPNG, Bill Morrison, proposed controversially that after independence, direct budgetary aid (no questions asked) might be replaced by project or program aid delivered only after ‘cooperation and consultation’ (Denoon 2005, 138).
- In 1978; a questioning of decentralisation as a process that could not be reversed, and a questioning of the high praise and promotion of a provincial government system.
- In 1982; a ‘watershed in the development of Melanesian feminism’ (King 1982, 364).

Oscar Spate, in the closing address to the 1968 seminar declared the seminars were ‘one of the tools … which can add something to the foundations of a Papuan and New Guinean nation’ (Spate 1968, 671). These were mighty claims for a mostly non-Papua New Guinean academic talk-fest in a colonial possession still six years away from independence. It was noticeable that Spate stressed it was the Australian National University’s Research School of Pacific Studies and its recently established New Guinea Research Unit, that ‘had played a not inconsiderable role in the intellectual activity of the country’ and he then praised two non-Papua New Guineans – Ken Inglis and Ron Crocombe – for providing ‘much of the impetus to the holding of the Waigani.’ (Spate 1968, 661). Crocombe was head of the New Guinea Research Unit and Inglis, the Professor of History at UPNG. If foundations were indeed being laid these were clearly more Australian than they were Papua New Guinean exercises in planning.

Were the Waigani seminars a home-grown seeding ground for ideas, or an outsider, closed shop in which predominantly non-Papua New Guinean scholars could debate their research theses and theories? In 1970, Oscar Spate gave the opening address and said the Waigani seminar ‘will not be, as it should not be, only an abstract discussion (Spate 1970, 3), suggesting that everyone realised it was popular and well attended but ultimately still an academic, intellectual talk-fest. Spate thought the seminars were not effective in practical terms, and should not have been expected to produce actual plans, projects and actions. He argued they were useful in determining broad gaols and principles ‘in forward planning, in the strategy and tactics of advance’ (Spate 1970, 11).

In the seminar in 1982 that reviewed progress since the setting of the Eight Point Plan and the National Goals and Directive Principles, seventy papers were presented over six days, including, the convenor claimed, some ‘memorable intellectual exchanges.’ (King, Lee, & Warakai 1985, xi). But the program also was criticised for overlooking two crucial issues at the time – corruption in government, and the decline in rural and urban law and order (King, Lee, & Warakai 1985, 13).

Donald Denoon, later a Professor of History at UPNG, argued that in Canberra and in the TPNG administration, ‘suspicion of higher education was widespread’ (Denoon 2005, 45) and Robert Waddell reporting in the AJPH’s ‘Political Chronicle’ highlighted the gap in Port Moresby between the Port Moresby administration quartered at Konedobu, the Papua New Guinean thinkers and academics on the Waigani campus at UPNG, distant Canberra bureaucrats and those working, teaching and researching in the Territory. At the 1970 seminar, Waddell thought there was a huge gap between ‘the lively potential of this country and the prosaic but no doubt well-intentioned approach of Canberra and Konedobu’ (Waddell 1970, 113).1

In the editor’s preface to the 1972 Waigani proceedings, Ron May admitted the seminar ‘may not have achieved much at the operative level’ and ‘might not have done much to establish a set of agreed priorities for Melanesian development. But it did generate some lively discussion’
Committee Australian advisors to the Constitutional Planning by Michael Faber, and in part by a couple of backroom of the University of East Anglia's visiting UN team led of 1972, which in turn had been based on the reports derived in part from Michael Somare's Eight Point Plan (King, Lee, & Warakai 1985, 1). They were, however, Directive Principles. These were claimed to be the 'home and it innovatively included five National Goals and the fast run home to independence in September 1975, Eventually Papua New Guinea wrote a constitution in the first elaborated in these seminars have been translated into programmes?' (Sali 1977, x).

Claims that Waigani was making a difference were standard in the opening and closing addresses. Matthias To Liman, a Minister and member of parliament in 1971, typically claimed the Waigani seminars ‘had a distinguished record for the high standard of the contribution they have made ... (it) provides analysis and discussion by experts ... (and) provides a forum where the aims of all spheres of development may be coordinated’ (To Liman 1972, 3 and 6). But at the tenth seminar in 1976, in the first year after independence, the opening address was given by the Minister for Primary Industry, Boyamo Sali, and he suggested the words of distinguished local thinkers and overseas intellectuals over the previous decade reflected transitions already taking place rather than initiated or drove through new changes. He asked ‘Who can say how many of the ideas first elaborated in these seminars have been translated into programmes?’ (Sali 1977, x).

Eventually Papua New Guinea wrote a constitution in the fast run home to independence in September 1975, and it innovatively included five National Goals and Directive Principles. These were claimed to be the ‘home grown fruit of grass-roots consultation and prolonged deliberation by the Constitutional Planning Committee’ (King, Lee, & Warakai 1985, 1). They were, however, derived in part from Michael Somare’s Eight Point Plan of 1972, which in turn had been based on the reports of the University of East Anglia’s visiting UN team led by Michael Faber, and in part by a couple of backroom Australian advisors to the Constitutional Planning Committee. The five guiding principles were accepted by the House of Assembly without modification, Donald Denoon argued, because Michael Somare saw them as general statements that ‘were vague enough to satisfy every point of view’ (Denoon 2005, 123). The National Goals and Directive Principles were critically analysed in the Waigani seminar of 1985, but generally may be said to have disappeared without much impact in the Papua New Guinea political arena in the three decades since independence. The consultations and village meetings prior to 1975 that responded to the proposed National Goals and Directive Principles had the appearance of direct participation in shaping a nation’s destiny, but like the Waigani seminars, they were also outsider-inspired and although espousing worthy principles, ended up generating more talk in Port Moresby and Canberra than legislative or administrative action. Other Pacific nations have not followed PNG’s annual talk-fest approach, although regional meetings are ubiquitous and Pacific-related congresses, round-tables, seminars, conferences, symposia and workshops are a daily occurrence across the region and around the world.

The Pacific Conference System
The future of the Pacific Islands region continues to be the subject of these talk-fests, so much that the annual schedule of events takes on the appearance of a conference system, like that institutionalised round of congresses and conferences promoted in Europe between World War I and II to solve international conflicts. The ‘Pacific conference system’ creates its own energy, has its own protocols and conventions and, because there are so many, has created, as Ron Crocombe noted, a Pacific Man and Pacific Woman – the perennial conference delegate tripping here and there in the region and beyond, on generous allowances and benefits, responding to the organising interest group’s need to be representative, and not necessarily in the area of their expertise or responsibility, and rarely implementing outcomes on their return home. The conferential system creates worthy, impressive, often-cited publications, and has follow-up meetings that require another round of annual and bi-annual delegate attendances. But they rarely translate into action, are often not reported on at home by delegates, only occasionally surface in domestic parliamentary debate, and serve merely to tick-the-box for an international funding agency or regional organisation.

This may seem cynical, but as Boyamo Sali asked at Waigani in 1976, ‘who can say how many of the ideas first elaborated in these seminars have been translated into programs?’ Three decades after Sali’s query, an editorial in Islands Business in 2009 asked the same question, querying whether the 53 conferences of the UN Commission on the Status of Women had led to any improvement across the board. Islands Business asked as the next overseas jaunt headed off for another in the endless round of meetings, ‘What difference has it made to the life of women in the Pacific over the years?’ (Islands Business 2009, 10).

Values or Interests
The Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration, known as the Pacific Plan, is an outsider approach, primarily driven by Australia, to enforce a common purpose in the Pacific Island response to the Millennium Development Goals. (Cate Morriss discusses the Pacific Plan below) The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) has adopted the Pacific Plan as a regional strategy for development, however, as Cate Morriss notes in her article in this issue, ‘the success of such a strategy relies on the local, national and regional capacity to
take decisive action, the strength of political will to make sustainable short and long term change ... Can the PIF be confident that ... (it) is right for the region?’ (Morris 2009) The Pacific Plan is intended to deliver real benefits to the people of the Pacific by coming up with practical steps to achieve four key pillars or target areas; economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security. The Plan puts forward 15 strategic objectives, which range from free trade, enhanced policing and the development of national sustainable development plans through to a regional ombudsman’s office.

Elise Huffer, writing in 2005 as the Pacific Plan came into effect, raised questions about the fourteen Pacific Island nation's commitment to regionalism. She asked, ‘should it be an expression of values or an expression of interests?’ The sensible answer is that it is about both, and yet in the Pacific Plan now adopted by the Forum, interests clearly trump values. The interests the Plan seeks to promote are those that serve primarily economic integration without considering the values of the people it represents’ (Huffer 2006, 48). This sounds remarkably similar to doubts raised about the Waigani Seminars, PNGs National Goals and Directive Principles and generally about the Pacific conferential system. Did all the insider and outsider talk that led to a regional development plan being tabled, argued for and espoused with appropriate governmental and representative authority, merely lead to yet another round of regional talk-fests without practical application, and worse, had not evolved from grass-roots community concerns and interests?

At the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) meeting in 2005 a series of actions were endorsed under the broad purpose of implementing the Pacific Plan. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs website noted that in endorsing the Pacific Plan, PIF leaders agreed on the implementation of a range of worthy projects, but the question remains, is trade access to non-Forum markets, a Technical College and a new building for bureaucrats of the Oceania Customs Organisation high on the MDG list of goals, or high on the priority lists of grass-roots communities? Is a new building for Oceanic Customs bureaucrats a more desirable outcome than sponsoring a small, very local, Kiribati History Teachers Association in Tarawa that will offer the professional development for its members that is not provided by their own Education Department? Has conforming to the language of the Millennium Development Goals, ticking the box for delegate attendance at regional meetings and being persuaded by the priorities of the major donors, overwhelmed taking action on essential and immediate local community problems?

Traditional Economies
The twenty years since the last Social Alternatives special issue on the Pacific have been characterised by change, modernity, development and globalisation and these issues are being tackled through a conventional, international and nationally structured academic dialogue that has created a ‘conference system’ and library shelves full of bound volumes, CDs and online sites. Criticism of over reliance on western models and borrowed values, outside experts and consultants is not new. Thirty-five years ago the ‘electrifying’ speakers that Ken Inglis noted in 1973 were all outsiders – Ivan Illich, Lloyd Best and Rene Dumont. But today there are electrifying speakers from within the region – such as a young nVanuatuan Member of Parliament, Ralph Regan, who for the last two years has spoken widely, demanding recognition for village, community and clan-based ‘traditional economy’ and a cultural heritage revival movement as integral factors in promoting national self-reliance. He identifies the enemy as government development policies based on growth, foreign investment, and cash and land acquisition for infrastructure3.

When will the day come when the fourteen PIF nations send in their reports, audits and recommendations electronically to international and regional meetings and ‘Skype’ their oral presentations and then reallocate the costly travel budget allocations to the practical grassroots activities that their delegates would have travelled to talk about?

At the bureaucratic, academic, theoretical and governmental levels, there are benefits from sending local thinkers and leaders off to engage in the conference system in the same arena as overseas intellectuals, thereby benefiting from global perspectives and holistic, transnational understandings. The conference system – the Talk-Fest – serves a useful purpose when its ideas circulate more widely and when it creates, as Ron May claimed, ‘a lively discussion’ that is translated into plain talk, and quickly informs the practical projects and programs of legislators and planners. But only rarely is a travel budget for yet another international, regional or sub-regional talk-fest rescinded and reallocated to twenty or thirty small-scale, local grass-roots events or projects.

Australian Engagement
The essays in this issue correctly argue that the Pacific needs international, regional and domestic levels of dialogue, planning and implementation. They argue that Australia needs to engage in this dialogue with Pacific Islanders who are already demanding and are already demonstrating energetic involvement in development, change and growth at their national and grass-roots
level. The essays also call for recognition of the benefits of keeping things small and as the t-shirts once said, 'think globally: act locally'.

The opening essays tackle four aspects of Australia’s relationship with the region; Nic Maclean on Australia’s response to regional climate change (Nic also contributed to the 1988 special issue), Jon Ritchie on the Pacific Islander guest worker scheme, Cate Morriss on the Pacific Plan and Chris Dixon and Sean Brawley on Australia’s troubled, but important relationship with PNG, particularly development priorities on the Kokoda Track. Paul D’Arcy then looks at exciting developments in the region, specifically an entrepreneurial model borrowed from Maori development in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Hilary Summy explores the historical experience and social conditions of Fiji Melanesians, Samantha Rose and Clive Moore examine the parlous state of research on the Pacific in Australian universities and the final pair of essays draw attention to the histories of two small and often overlooked indigenous communities, the Rotumans in Australia and Solomon Islanders in Fiji. Finally, Hannah Perkins critiques the touring exhibition Talking Tapa, just one of several recent art exhibitions bringing Pacific art to Australian audiences.

References

Spate, OHK. 1968. ‘Closing Address: Britannia, Anglia, Melanesia’. In The History of Melanesia, ed. K. Inglis. Port Moresby: UPNG/Canberra: ANU.

Endnote

1. Quoting or citing the Waigani seminars is rare in the literature suggesting they were not regarded as scholarly enough to be cited as conventional references. An exception is the collection edited by A Clunies Ross and J Langmore, eds, 1973, Alternative strategies for Papua New Guinea (Melbourne, OUP, 1973) which refers to several seminars.
2. The doctoral theses of Jonathon Ritchie at Deakin University, and Sam Kari at Queensland University of Technology tackled aspects of consultation and drafting in the constitution making process. Although the legal aspects of the constitution have a large body of literature, more needs to be done on the Eight Aims and NGDP and their implementation after independence.
3. Ralph Reganvanu has spoken widely on this topic, including keynote addresses at the PHA conference, Dunedin in December 2007, the AAAPS conference, Canberra April 2008, the “Changing Pacific Policy” symposium at Deakin University, February 2009.

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Max Quanchi’s teaching and research focuses on the history of the Pacific. His latest books are Photographing Papua (2007), Hunting the Collectors; Pacific collections in Australian museums, galleries and archives; Oceanic collections in Australia (2007) with Susan Cochrane, and Dictionary of discovery and exploration of the Pacific Islands (2006) with John Robson. He was co-author with Samantha Rose and Clive Moore of A National Strategy for Pacific Studies (2009) published by the Australian Association for the Advancement of Pacific Studies.
Introduction

After two years in office, the Labor Government under Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has improved the atmospherics of Australia's engagement with the Pacific islands. At the end of eleven years of conservative government under former Prime Minister John Howard, relations with key Pacific governments were in tatters: the Moti affair and aid disputes had soured relations with Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands; Fiji's interim administration was angry over post-coup 'smart sanctions' introduced by Australia and New Zealand; and John Howard's refusal to act on global warming dismayed the small island states that are already suffering adverse climate impacts.

Climate policy is a key area where the Rudd government has moved to improve Australia's image compared to its predecessor. From the time of the 1997 Forum leaders’ meeting in Rarotonga, Australia stood aside from its Pacific neighbours by refusing to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and by delaying efforts to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. For more than a decade, the Howard Government bowed to the transnational corporations that run Australia's coal, steel and aluminium industries, which successfully lobbied to prevent, delay or limit action on climate change.

Incoming Prime Minister Rudd won applause internationally when he announced Australia's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol at the December 2007 meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Bali.

From opposition, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) had also promised climate adaptation funding to the Asia-Pacific region. In 2008, Prime Minister Rudd announced the International Climate Change Adaptation Initiative (ICCAI), pledging $150 million over three years to meet high priority climate adaptation needs in vulnerable countries. The government also launched an International Forest Carbon Initiative (IFCI), focused on Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, with a further $200 million over five years.

Improved regional co-operation on climate was highlighted in August 2009 at the Pacific Islands Forum leaders’ meeting in Cairns, when the Australian government issued a new climate policy for the islands region: 'Engaging our Pacific Neighbours on Climate Change.' In a significant political coup, Rudd also won support from island leaders for Australia's climate strategy, issuing the joint 'Pacific Leaders Call to Action on Climate Change.'

It's a far cry from the Howard years. But does the new Australian policy really respond to the climate emergency? In a scathing editorial, published in September 2009, the regional news magazine Islands Business condemned the deal struck in Cairns:

The outcome of the Pacific Islands Forum meeting on climate change is essentially a death warrant for Pacific Islanders. But if Australia and New Zealand think Pacific Islanders will give up and slink away in the shadows defeated, they are wrong. We remain even more determined than ever because our lives, identities and our future depend on it. The truth of the matter is that...
neo-colonialism was the order of the day in Cairns. It was evident in Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s opening statement: ‘We are playing our part in international gatherings - including by representing the interests of the Pacific islands nations - in other international fora where Australia participates, including the G20.’ That’s very gracious Mr Rudd. But who in the Pacific elected you to represent us at the G20? Who appointed you Sheriff of our Pacific county?

To understand this anger, it’s important to go beyond the spin and look at how Australia’s interests – as the world’s largest coal exporter and a major exporter of uranium – clash with the priorities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Pacific. Closer inspection of key areas – on greenhouse gas reduction targets, adaptation funding and climate displacement – show there’s a long way to go.

Stronger Targets

The ‘Pacific Leaders’ Call to Action on Climate Change’ sets out a common position for Forum member countries in the lead up to the December 2009 UNFCCC climate negotiations in Copenhagen:

- We call for a post-2012 outcome that sets the world on a path to limit the increase in global average temperatures to 2 degrees Celsius or less.
- We call on states to reduce global emissions by at least 50 per cent below 1990 levels by 2050.
- We call on states to ensure that global emissions peak no later than 2020.
- We call on developed economies to take the lead by setting ambitious and robust mid-term emissions reduction targets—consistent with the agreed science and the directions embraced by the Major Economies Forum Meeting in July 2009.

But this Forum call for a 50 per cent cut in GHG emissions by 2050 is in direct contradiction to the negotiating position of the Least Developed Countries (LDC) caucus and also the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in global climate negotiations. In its submissions to UNFCCC meetings to Bali (2007), Poznan (2008) and Copenhagen (2009), AOSIS has called for at least 45 per cent reductions by 2020 and over 95 per cent by 2050, which requires much stronger action by Australia and other major industrialised powers. AOSIS has also called for a peak in global emissions by 2015, not 2020.

As detailed in its latest Pacific climate policy, ‘Australia is advocating an ambitious global effort to stabilise greenhouse gases at 450 parts per million (ppm) carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2-e) or lower.’ The government states that this target is needed in order to limit temperature increases to 2 degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels. But this is widely divergent from the latest “agreed science”, as set out by IPCC scientists, who see the need to draw down carbon from the atmosphere at much greater rates.

The rapidly changing climate science has highlighted the need for much more stringent GHG reduction targets than set out in existing Australian policy, to avoid catastrophic consequences for low-lying atoll nations. Rather than a 2 degree target, AOSIS has previously called for “well below 1.5 degrees Celsius”, and many developing nations are calling for greenhouse gases to be stabilised well below 350ppm. This stronger target is now acknowledged by many leading climate scientists, as noted by the UNFCCC’s leading climate scientist Rajendra Pachauri in August 2009:

As chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), I cannot take a position because we do not make recommendations. But as a human being I am fully supportive of that goal. What is happening, and what is likely to happen, convinces me that the world must be really ambitious and very determined at moving toward a 350 target.

Seeing the devastation of cyclones and storm surges, business interests from the Finance, Insurance and Real Estate (FIRE) sectors have long recognised the need for stronger action on climate. Australian businessman Ian Dunlop, former chair of the Australian Greenhouse Office Experts Group on Emissions, states:

The target for stabilisation of atmospheric carbon to avoid catastrophic consequences and maintain a safe climate is now probably a concentration of less than 300 ppm carbon dioxide, not the outdated 450-550 ppm carbon dioxide in current proposals.

But this will involve the Australian government taking much more urgent action, in the face of ongoing lobbying from the coal, steel and uranium industries. The Rudd government has approved new uranium exports and increased the number of uranium mines, even though attempts to promote nuclear energy are contrary to the interests of developing countries (especially small island developing states which require sustainable, mostly decentralised, low-cost energy systems, adapted both to local needs and available capital, resources and labour). As AOSIS argued at the December 2008 UNFCCC Conference in Poznan:
Technologies that generate additional or new environmental and health risk challenges for the international community, such as nuclear power, should not be included in the energy mix.\textsuperscript{11}

Island governments are making significant investments in renewable energy programs and are concerned that funding for energy programs and technology transfer will be directed away from renewables, as fossil fuel and nuclear corporations attempt to gain government subsidies to protect their industries and profits.\textsuperscript{12}

**Will Local Communities Ever See Adaptation Funds?**

In April 2009, Prime Minister Rudd stood outside Parliament House alongside his PNG counterpart Sir Michael Somare, to acknowledge that Australia's aid program in Papua New Guinea was top heavy with consultants, with too little action on the ground. Rudd said:

> Too much money has been consumed by consultants and not enough money was actually delivered to essential assistance in teaching, in infrastructure, in health services on the ground, in the villages, across Papua New Guinea.\textsuperscript{13}

The same problem is looming with funds to assist neighbouring island states to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change.

On a global scale, a sticking point for climate negotiations is the need for the developed world to commit adequate funds for technology transfer and adaptation. Developing nations are calling for new and additional funds beyond existing Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) aid commitments and stressing that adaptation funds must be grants, not loans.

Pacific governments have welcomed existing pledges of support for adaptation from donors like Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the European Union. But atoll nations are concerned that adaptation funds may be going into consultants and bureaucracy rather than programs at local level - they want to ensure that donors maintain specific programs around food security, water supply, disease prevention and coastal management. As the Forum leaders' official communiqué in 2008 stressed:

> The priority of Pacific SIDS is securing sustainable financing for immediate and effective implementation of concrete adaptation programs on the ground.\textsuperscript{15}

Another problem for Pacific states is their capacity to deal with a complex array of multilateral and bilateral climate initiatives. Six new bilateral environment funds have been announced over the last three years, including Australia's *International Climate Change Adaptation Initiative* (ICCAI), Japan's *Cool Earth Partnership* and the EU's *Global Climate Change Alliance*. There are also global funds established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - such as the *Least Developed Countries Fund* (LDCF), the UNFCCC *Special Climate Change Fund* (SCCF) and the global UNFCCC *Adaptation Fund*.

At the United Nations, Tuvalu's Prime Minister Apisai Ielemia has argued for easier access to these funds, which will provide much needed resources to small island states for adaptation programs:

> It is very clear that financial resources for adaptation are completely inadequate. ... SIDS like Tuvalu need direct access and expeditious disbursement of funding for real adaptation urgently because we are suffering already from the effects of climate change. How else can we say it more clearly? It seems however that some key industrialised states are trying to make the Adaptation Fund inaccessible to those most in need. I am compelled to say we are deeply disappointed with the manner some of our partners are burying us in red tape. This is totally unacceptable.\textsuperscript{16}

The challenge is to ensure that more of these adaptation funds can be focussed on community level activities, instead of being soaked up in research and policy making. Speaking after the Small Islands States caucus at the 2009 Cairns Forum, the Premier of Niue and outgoing Forum chair Toke Talagi told the author:

> This is something that we discussed at some length. We appreciate the fact that there's a lot of funding out there, but there are problems with accessing those funds. There's also ... the problem that you've highlighted that we need a lot of consultants to advise us which funds are available or not. We also want to correlate what funds are available as well as our plans on climate change.

Much of Australia's $150 million pledge of climate adaptation funding for 2008-11 will be channelled through consultants and multilateral and regional intergovernmental organisations: $40 million goes for a World Bank program on climate resilience, $12 million...
on the Pacific Adaptation Strategy Assistance Program, $6 million to Pacific intergovernmental agencies (SPC, SPREP, FFA) and $6 million over three years to the Global Environment Facility’s small grants program.

Another $20 million goes to Australian scientists for climate research. In March 2009, Climate Change Minister, Penny Wong, announced the Pacific Climate Change Science Program, to be funded from Australia’s $150 million adaptation fund. This money will support the Centre for Australian Weather and Climate Research, run by the Australian Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO. In April 2009, the government advertised 24 positions for climate scientists and researchers to be based in Hobart and Melbourne.

The allocation of significant amounts from the Pacific climate adaptation initiative to Australian researchers may produce valuable scientific data. But there are questions about how this research is communicated to policy makers in the Pacific, let alone translated into concrete adaptation work in the low-lying atolls of the region. Much of this research will generate climate models as a basis for planning risk reduction, but comes at a time when island governments, universities and NGOs are seeking resources for empirical research and action in the atolls and islands of the region.

The challenge for climate adaptation donors is how to draw on local knowledge and empower grassroots communities across the region. So far, the Australian government has pledged only $2.7 million of the $150 million adaptation fund to non-government organisations. Oxfam New Zealand director Barry Coates argues:

A greater proportion of funding from adaptation funds need to be allocated to implementation of basic resilience programs at community level, rather than further studies and consultancies.

Researchers like the University of Melbourne’s Jon Barnett agree that there’s a need to focus more research and action at local level, to ensure adaptation funding achieves the desired outcomes:

In the same way that aid does not always enhance development and can indeed undermine it, so too may aid for adaptation fail to promote adaptation, and may indeed undermine it.17

Dealing with Displaced People

The current intergovernmental Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change 2006-15 (PIFACC), developed by the Forum member countries, makes no mention of climate displacement or migration.

This contrasts with many Pacific NGOs and churches, which have argued that Australia and New Zealand, as the largest members of the Pacific Islands Forum, have particular responsibilities to take displaced people from their island neighbours.

When they look at international rather than domestic impacts, climate advocacy groups in Australia and New Zealand have highlighted the issue of ‘Pacific climate refugees.’ But the threat of climate displacement raises a number of practical, emotional and political responses, for communities who have cultural and economic ties to their land, reefs and islands. As Tuvalu Prime Minister Apisai Ielemia told the December 2008 UNFCCC conference in Poznan:

It is our belief that Tuvalu, as a nation, has a right to exist forever. It is our basic human right. We are not contemplating migration. We are a proud nation with a unique culture which cannot be relocated elsewhere. We want to survive as a people and as a nation. We will survive. It is our fundamental right. Tuvalu mo te Atua.18

In interviews with people around the Pacific, different opinions came from the elderly compared to younger people who have more flexible skills for migration. As one old man told me in Solomon Islands:

They talk about us moving. But we are tied to this land. Will we take our cemeteries with us? For we are nothing without our land and our ancestors.

In spite of this, some Pacific island governments like Kiribati, Tokelau and Niue are openly discussing issues of relocation and resettlement of people affected by climate change. In August 2009, the outgoing chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, Premier of Niue, Toke Talagi, says it may be time for the regional organisation to formally consider the issue of resettlement. Speaking at the official opening of the 2009 Forum leaders meeting in Cairns, Talagi stated:

While all of us are affected, the situation for small island states is quite worrisome. For them, choices such as resettlement must be considered seriously and I wonder whether the Forum is ready to commence formal discussion on the matter.19
Across the Pacific, there are a number of examples where people are considering relocation from low lying islands after being affected by extreme weather events, tectonic land shifts or climactic change that damages food security and water supply. The case of the Carteret Islands in Bougainville is well known, where Ursula Rakova and the local NGO Tulele Peisa are assisting families to resettle on church-donated land on the main island of Buka. There are similar problems looming in other outlying atoll communities, such as the Duke of York atolls (a number of small low-lying islands in St. George’s Channel near Rabaul in Papua New Guinea) or the Mortlock Islands in Chuuk State, Federated States of Micronesia. In Solomon Islands, tectonic plate movement and sea-level rise may lead to the displacement of people in outlying atolls like Ongtong Java (Lord Howe) or artificial islands like Walande in Malaita Province.

For many years, Australian governments have been reluctant to publicly address this issue. In October 2006, the then Minister for Immigration Amanda Vanstone stated that her department had not made any plans to deal with people displaced by environmental or climate change, arguing: ‘There’s no such thing as a climate refugee.’ In November 2006, the Secretary of the Department of Immigration Andrew Metcalfe told a Senate estimates hearing that the Australian Government had done no planning on how people movement caused by climate change in the Asia-Pacific region might affect Australia. Since then however, the debate has been flourishing amongst security analysts and strategic think tanks, which have focussed on border protection and the potential for conflict over land and resources. In 2007, the then Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty sparked a political debate when he argued that climate change will turn border security into Australia’s biggest policing issue this century. He stated that climate change could increase displacement and migration in our region:

In their millions, people could begin to look for new land and they will cross oceans and borders to do it. Existing cultural tensions may be exacerbated as large numbers of people undertake forced migration. The potential security issues are enormous and should not be underestimated.

The security perspective has also been highlighted in Force 2030, the May 2009 Defence White Paper issued by the Rudd government. This is the first time the climate issue has been discussed in a Defence White Paper, but it does not really reflect a shift in focus from ‘national security’ to ‘human security.’ In the paper, action on climate change is reframed through the prism of border security:

The main effort against such developments will of course need to be undertaken through co-ordinated international climate change mitigation and economic assistance strategies...should these and other strategies fail to mitigate the strains relating to climate change and they exacerbate existing precursors for conflict, the Government would probably have to use the ADF as an instrument to deal with any threats inimical to our interests.

Will people displaced by global warming be redefined as ‘threats inimical to our interests’? Social justice activists need to reframe the debate, to highlight the right to development for affected communities wherever they are, rather than just focussing on the need for migration rights.

A worrying sign is that some Australian officials seem to be willing to write off the Pacific. In the face of a call by Tuvalu in Copenhagen for a legally binding climate treaty, key Australian climate advisor Ross Garnaut baldly stated:

The South Pacific countries will end up having their populations relocated to Australia or New Zealand and the rest of the world expects that and in the end, we’re likely to accommodate that so there’s a solution there.

In its latest Pacific climate policy, the Rudd government notes:

The potential for climate change to displace people is increasingly gaining international attention. Australians are aware of and concerned about this issue.

But the Pacific needs more than awareness and concern. Successive Australian governments have failed to engage in forward planning involving communities and governments around the region, to address the issue of displacement from a rights-based approach.

The Human Dimension

Leaders from Small Island Developing States around the world gathered in the Maldives in 2007, and issued the Malé Declaration on the Human Dimensions of Climate Change. Calling for urgent action by developed nations, they “committed to an inclusive process that puts people,
their prosperity, homes, survival and rights at the centre of the climate change debate.”

As Australian politicians debate the technicalities of an Emissions Trading Scheme and how much compensation to provide the coal industry, it’s important we come back to this human dimension. We must never lose sight of the fact that climate change in its essence is about people. Climate change is a matter of human security, as it undermines peoples’ rights to life, security, food, water, health, shelter and culture.

By failing to tackle climate change with urgency, developed countries like Australia are effectively violating the human rights of millions of the world’s poorest people, including people in the Pacific islands. Australia’s current climate policy for the Pacific does not measure up to the challenges of the climate emergency.

Endnotes
5. Pacific island states are active members of AOSIS, which unites 43 countries and territories from oceans around the world - over 20 per cent of the membership of the UN General Assembly.
10. “We can keep jobs and save the planet”, The Age, 6 March 2009
14. A study by the Imperial College in London has found that the Stern report (2006), the IPCC’s Fourth Assessment Report (2007) and other major studies have underestimated the levels of global adaptation funding, with two to three times more funds being required. See Martin Parry et al: Assesing the costs of adaptation to climate change – a review of the UNFCCC and other recent estimates, Grantham Institute for Climate Change, Imperial College, London, August 2009.
20. “No such thing as climate change refugees: Vanstone”, ABC News Online, Monday, 30 October 2006

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Introduction

The Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme was announced by the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Stephen Smith, before the meeting of Pacific Forum leaders in Niue in August 2008. It envisaged that as many as 2,500 Pacific Islanders, from Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Vanuatu, would participate in a pilot seasonal work program in Australia over three years. At the end of the pilot, the scheme would be evaluated with a view to expanding it to help fill the gap in employment in Australia’s horticultural sector (Smith 2008).

Reaction to the scheme’s announcement was very positive from Pacific Island nations: at least, from those which had been included as members of the pilot program. Others, which had missed out, were not dismissive of the scheme’s intent, however, merely their failure to be included in it. The general sense was that at last Australia was doing something constructive. In following the lead of New Zealand and other developed nations outside of the region, it was seen as responding to the lobbying and promotion of the concept that had been under way for some years (see for example Maclellan and Mares 2006; Hayward-Jones 2008, 2). This paper will examine some of the reasons for this favourable response, and will examine in some detail the scheme’s impact in Papua New Guinea, the largest of the Pacific Island states, before concluding on a note of some concern about its future implementation.

Symbolism: Australia in the Region

Income from remittances has played an important role in the economies of Pacific island states for some time, in common with many other developing nations. For some, it has been vital: in 2005, remittances accounted for 40% of Tonga’s GDP, and 15% of that of Kiribati (Browne and Mineshima 2007, 12). However, as important as the income from remittances can be, the reason for the favourable response to the Australian scheme transcends the purely economic. It has been welcomed as much for its symbolism as for any other reason, as a further sign of the warming of Australia’s relations with its Pacific neighbours. Such a softening of approach, it is felt, may mean the door will eventually open to longer term settlement, study, or work opportunities for the region’s peoples, that will go some way towards addressing problems of economic uncertainty and environmental threat.

Beginning with the election of the Rudd government in November 2007, there has been an overt and deliberate policy of rapprochement with the region’s small island nations. The rhetoric of policy has shifted from caution over ‘failing states’ to a constructive building of partnerships. This was articulated in the Port Moresby Declaration of March 2008, in which Rudd set out his government’s vision (Rudd 2008). The Declaration acknowledged the problems afflicting the region, particularly in meeting the Millennium Development Goals. It emphasised, however, that the path to their solution would lie in a cooperative approach characterised by mutual respect and responsibility. In this it differed markedly from the dismissive approach contained in the 2003 foreign policy white paper, Advancing the National Interest, which declared that ‘Australia cannot presume to fix the problems of the South Pacific countries’ (DFAT 2003, 93). The main vehicle for the new cooperative approach would be the Pacific Partnerships for Development.
the scheme’s introduction has been viewed as a sign of Australia’s willingness to engage with the region. Perhaps it would be better to say ‘re-engage’, however, as the history of Australia’s previous relationships with the island states has not been forgotten in the Pacific, even if it may have been in this country.

There is not room in this article to recount this history, and there is a body of literature on various facets of the relationship between Australia and the Pacific, which can be looked at for further information. In particular, there is a substantial literature on the subject of the nineteenth-century labour trade (see for example Moore 1989 or more recently, Banivanua Mar 2007). But it is important to note that the activities of the labour trade, the subsequent introduction of the White Australia policy, and the years of colonial or semi-colonial administration remain part of how Australia is depicted in our region (Broinowski 2003). The introduction of the seasonal work scheme is being understood as another step in this lengthy history. It is appreciated for its symbolic message.

Responses in the Pacific
The approach of Pacific states to the prospect of the Seasonal Work Scheme, as noted earlier, has been generally welcoming. In the smaller island states of Kiribati and Tonga, with a well-established system of external work and a historical dependence on remittances, the scheme has been treated unexceptionally. The memorandum of understanding between Tonga and Australia, to set up the implementation arrangements, was signed on 28 November 2008. It was made clear that the Australian scheme would differ from the existing arrangement with New Zealand (in that Tongans who had participated in the New Zealand scheme would be ineligible). In April of 2009, before the effects of the global financial crisis caused their relocation to Mundubbera, the first group of 50 Tongans who were working at the time at Robinvale were ‘earning good money and sending remittances back to their families’, according to a member of Tonga’s parliament (Matangi Tonga 2009).

In Kiribati, which also signed the memorandum on 28 November, care was exercised again to differentiate the scheme from the New Zealand exercise. This had received some criticism arising from complaints over little work and pay and poor living conditions. In fact, thirteen of the seventy I-Kiribati participants had disappeared while in New Zealand (Radio New Zealand International, 2008). In Vanuatu, the country’s Finance Minister, Willie Jimmy, said that being selected as one of the participating nations was a big achievement for his country: ‘I thank the Australian government’, he said, calling the inclusion a ‘long awaited dream come true for the people of Vanuatu’ (ABC 2008). His country also signed the memorandum of understanding on 28 November.

The people of Tuvalu were perhaps understandably unhappy about being overlooked when its neighbour, Kiribati, was included in the scheme. KelesomaSaloa, Tuvalu’s acting Foreign Affairs Secretary, said on hearing the news that ‘we are just hoping, we can’t really force any country to take us on board; we are just requesting if possible to give us a chance’ (ABC 2008). Even Timor-L’este was hopeful that the pilot might be allowed to incorporate some of its people, although these hopes were quickly dashed (ABC 2008).

While the small island states of Kiribati, Tonga, and Vanuatu have been able to respond reasonably quickly and smoothly to the scheme’s initial stages, the situation in PNG has been rather more complex. There are demographic, economic, and political factors that have contributed to its slow take-up. If care is not taken these may lead to its eventual failure.

Papua New Guinea: A More Complex Case
The reason for the scheme’s embrace in the region mentioned earlier – its symbolism as a marker of Australia’s willingness to engage – holds truer in PNG than perhaps anywhere else in the Pacific. One only needs to see the lengthy period of colonial occupation by Australians, and the shared enterprise that led to PNG’s independence at the end of this time in 1975, to understand something of the ties that many Papua New Guineans continue to feel with Australia. Bringing matters up to the present, Australia is a constant cultural and economic presence on the Papua New Guinean landscape. The close, even fanatical interest shown by many in the annual Australian State-of-Origin rugby league series is a strong testament to this.

The Papua New Guinean Government commenced lobbying for a scheme in April 2008, shortly after the meeting that led to the Port Moresby Declaration. It is highly significant that its first mentioned goal was ‘to revive the diminishing people to people relations between [the Papua New Guinean and Australian] people’. The focus of the scheme was to be on rural people and communities, not least ‘to reduce urban drift’ (Abal 2009, 41).

By June, though, there were some real doubts over whether Papua New Guinea would be included in the scheme which had begun to be discussed in the public arena. Although nothing overt was said to suggest that this might be the case, suspicion mounted both in PNG and in Australia. The country’s High Commissioner, Charles Lepani worried that leaving Papua New Guinea out of the scheme would be a ‘blow to relations between the countries’, even ‘a tragedy’ (Post-Courier 16 June 2009).
2008, 9). His concerns were echoed by Keith Jackson, at the time president of the PNG Association of Australia, representing Australians who had ties with its former territory. Jackson remarked that, given the Australian effort to repair its bilateral relationship with Papua New Guinea, ‘it would be a deep irony indeed’ if the exclusion of PNG was to ‘plunge the relationship into a state of disrepair’ (Post-Courier 6 August 2008, 9).

In the days immediately before the announcement was to be made, Jackson received advice from the office of the Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs, Duncan Kerr, which he believed gave a strong hint that PNG would be overlooked. ‘Selection of the countries’ to be involved, Jackson was told, ‘should not be misread as reflecting the state of bilateral relations’. He took this piece of diplomatic-speak to mean rejection (The National 18 August 2008).

I was in Port Moresby at the time, just before the Niue meeting. The talk in the newspapers and around the campus of the University was that the country would indeed be excluded from the pilot project. Assuming the worst, many saw being left out as yet another put-down by the Australian Government. They saw it as akin to the 2005 incident when Prime Minister Somare was made to remove his shoes when going through the security barrier at Brisbane airport. This incident, regarded in Australia as something trivial—even comic—in nature, caused deeply felt offence on the streets of Port Moresby, where Australian and other expatriates were advised to stay in their hotel rooms for fear of retaliation. It was, an Australian observer noted, seen as ‘symptomatic of an attitude to which they are very sensitive … you’re on your knees, you’re weak, we’re powerful, you take it’ (Modjeska 2005). So it was with the potential exclusion from the seasonal work program.

One young Papua New Guinean told me that,

There are whisperings and rumours that PNG is not going to be part of that project. This does not reflect a warm and close relationship. I mean, one thing the Australian people have to realise is that we are a proud people, Papua New Guineans. We have land. We are not interested in going and setting up overseas somewhere. We’d like to go out, learn as much as we can, come back and impart what we’ve learned with our own people. You have no fear of us overstaying (personal communication).

When, however, Papua New Guinean inclusion was announced, political leaders were effusive in praise and thanks. Foreign minister Sam Abalsaw it as ‘a vote of confidence in the country’s younger generation’ (Post-Courier 21 August 2008, 7), while Somare described the decision as ‘most welcoming’ and one that showed Australia’s willingness to ‘engage more meaningfully with Pacific Island Governments’ (Post-Courier 22 August 2008, 6). While expressing some caution about the terms of employment, the General Secretary of Papua New Guinea’s Amalgamated General Workers Union, Andrew Kandeskasi, said of the scheme that ‘it was in the right direction’, and that ‘PNG gains a lot from it’ (ABC 2008).

It only took a matter of days before the first attempts to cash in on the announcement. Showing the level of enthusiasm widely felt for the scheme, within a week more than 800 young people had registered their interest with the Lae-based Melanesian Chamber of Commerce. Each of them had given a non-refundable deposit of fifty Kina, thereby providing the Chamber and the Australian company with which it was working with a totally illegal windfall of PGK 40,000 (The National 25 August 2008). The Australian High Commissioner, Chris Moraitis, rushed in to emphasise that these goings-on had nothing to do with the official pilot scheme, the arrangements for which were a long way from being determined.

Unfortunately for the scheme and for the hundreds and thousands of Papua New Guineans who have showed interest in it, the vacuum of news concerning its final structure has continued, almost to the present day. The opportunity to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Australian government in November last year was passed up by PNG, and in December Minister Abal was still cautiously questioning whether more should be learned from the New Zealand experience before going ahead and committing to the Australian scheme (Post-Courier 9 December 2008, 19). The other three countries involved, he said, had experience with the New Zealand program and hence were able to adapt quickly to the scheme; this was not the case with Papua New Guinea. Notwithstanding this, ‘PNG’s preparations for participation in the Australian pilot scheme are at an advanced stage’, he told reporters in January of this year, anticipating that the memorandum would be signed at the next PNG/Australia Ministerial Forum, set to take place in June (Post-Courier 23 January 2009, 3).

The Forum came and went in Brisbane, with a short note welcoming progress made on arrangements for Papua New Guinean participation, and at the time of writing, the technical aspects of the arrangement are still being reviewed by the PNG National Executive Council.

Despite the uncertainty, enough of the scheme’s arrangements on the ground in PNG have been promulgated to allow an appreciation of what it might look
like. It is by now commonly understood that the scheme will entail a total of between 600 and 800 Papua New Guineans, the first 200 of whom are very optimistically expected to arrive in Australia in October or November. As the ‘technical aspects’ are still be confirmed, no recruiting agents or employers have been identified and Papua New Guineans are being warned to be cautious of any attempts to do so without authority. It is probably fair to say, though, that a certain sense of ennui has set in, as the original high level of enthusiasm generated for the scheme has been strangled in red tape. There is real concern that despite the good intentions and the powerful symbolism expressed by PNG’s inclusion in the scheme, it will all go awry, thanks to the ‘usual suspects’ that bedevil public administration in the country. As a well-placed colleague in Port Moresby told me recently, ‘auspac wokwokskem I buga up!’ (personal communication).

Conclusion: Storm Clouds Ahead?

From the Pacific perspective, the establishment of the seasonal work scheme is on the whole a positive development in terms of relations with Australia, economic benefit, and social cohesion. In common with developing states the world over, Pacific island nations look to remittances for much-needed income, and this is especially so in some countries including Tonga, Samoa and Kiribati. In the face of continuing global financial turmoil this source of funds becomes even more important.

However, a stronger reason for the welcome extended to the scheme has been its significance as a mark of Australia’s willingness to engage in a mutually responsive manner with the region. There are strong reasons of historical association that underpin this, but even more importantly, an engaged Australia willing, be more likely to be there to assist Pacific island states as they face severe economic and environmental challenges. The social and cultural side-effects of this scheme are acknowledged; but by concentrating on rural young people it is intended to both increase the wealth returning to the villages and provide business opportunities in these rural communities.

Notwithstanding all of the above, there is a grave danger that the pilot scheme could be derailed by, on the one hand, the kind of administrative mismanagement sceptics were always concerned about, and on the other, the impact of the global financial crisis in Australia. If it proves not to be a success, the Pacific Seasonal Worker Scheme will join the ranks of other encounters between Australia and the Pacific that have marked our long history of association.

References


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Aunty Jane was a fallen woman, my family said

Her washing line
held just one dress,
almost dry, blowing
large pink flowers
blending to the garden.
It couldn’t have fitted her for years,
its waist tiny tight folds that somehow
the wash hadn’t taken the mould from,
Grace Kelly-like it limps
and from the crossbeam in the turf shed,
her hair whitened blonde, her face purpled green,
we cut her down,
hers two nephews.
We cut her down.

NOEL KING,
CLASH, CO KERRY,
IRELAND
The Pacific Plan and Gender: Policies, Programs, and (has there been any) Progress

CATE MORRIS

This article explores the use of gender mainstreaming as a strategy of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) in its Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration, and the difficulties that this approach presents in terms of meaningful outcomes. Adopting a single strategy of gender mainstreaming has some challenges at a regional level, not the least that of ensuring adequate monitoring and evaluation at country level when budgets are already strained. However it will show that, despite the problematic nature of the gender strategy, there have been a number of positive steps initiated both in the Pacific and from within Australia under the auspices of the Pacific Plan even though identifying overall regional progress is hindered somewhat by the Plans reporting processes.

The Pacific Island Forum

The Pacific Island Forum has attempted to address the under-representation of regional women in decision making by supporting various programs to improve attitudes toward, and the reality of, numbers of women in regional parliaments. They have done this by establishing their own gender standards through the development of a gender policy and appointment of a gender advisor, and more broadly by encouraging governments to adhere to their obligations to both regional and international agreements for gender equality. In particular, through the Pacific Island Forum Leaders meetings in recent years, they have promoted the aims of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the Pacific Platform for Action. Australia has also supported the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) in this endeavour and rightly so as a member state and signatory to those agreements. Under the guidelines in 2005 of the Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration (hereafter the Pacific Plan) gender mainstreaming has been the chosen strategy for ensuring that women were included in policies and programs that fall within its scope, namely those broadly defined pillars or target areas of sustainable development, security, good governance and economic growth. The Forum has made some progress under the provisions of the Pacific Plan, however, there are considerable gaps in what we know about implementation due to the limitations of the reporting process.

Establishing Policy

The Pacific has unique challenges that are embedded in the cultural and political diversity of the region, juxtaposed with anomalies between concepts of tradition, custom and culture and the adoption of modernisation. One of the challenges is that the Pacific Island states have had the lowest global return rates of women to parliament. In elections held around the region during 2007 this was as low as 1.8%. No women won seats in the elections in the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu in 2007, or in Nauru and Tonga in 2008. Globally, of seven parliaments currently with no women, five are in the Pacific and the other two are Saudi Arabia and Qatar where women do not vote (Ballington, 2008).

The introduction of policies to address gender disparity at a regional level has been a relatively recent occurrence. The PIF appointed a gender issues adviser in 1996, (Gayle Nelson was Adviser between 1996 and 2000) and subsequently adopted a gender policy in 1998. PIF Member States were encouraged to do as much as they could to implement country level policy, but as many Pacific nations fall under the category of ‘developing small island states’ (Samoa, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Kiribati and the Solomon Islands are ranked as ‘least developed’ by the United Nations). They face challenges of low budgets, little capacity to support services in terms of expertise and financial assistance, and a high dependence on foreign aid. The reality is that within their own means, such nations cannot easily or realistically place a high priority on gender policy and would require high degrees of practical support to take action in this area and PIF does not have the resources to adequately assist, no matter how genuine the desire.

The PIF Gender Policy was revised in May 2003 to include a number of indicators for each of the MDG principles to further the ongoing evaluation of the implementation process. Forum Leaders admitted to past shortfalls in this regard:
There is a view within the region that Pacific institutions and processes are not as gender sensitive as they should be. Given the changing roles and responsibilities of men and women, and the increasingly recognised role that women play in society, the Forum needs to acknowledge and encourage the participation of women in decision-making at all levels (PIF 2004, 31).

This appeal by the PIF stopped short of identifying specifically a target for the advancement of gender equality, however, it did specify that PIF should ‘reach out to women’ (2004,10) and address the low participation of women in all levels of decision-making processes and structures, as well as the reduction and elimination of domestic violence, and the improvement of women’s literacy and health status (2004,13). It also declared that PIF would endeavour to integrate women more effectively into national and regional decision-making processes. According to the PIF rhetoric, participation by women was seen as an essential element for success (2004, 18-19).

**Debating a Strategy for Action**

Having established and refined a regional gender policy between 1998 and 2003, and identified specific areas of concern for the policy to address, the PIF then committed itself to the inclusion of gender sensitive perspectives and outcomes in the development and implementation of the Pacific Plan. The PIF then adopted a policy of gender mainstreaming within the framework of the Pacific Plan whereby the Plan’s four individual target areas, or ‘pillars’, of Economic Growth, Sustainable Development, Good Governance and Security were to incorporate gender as an integral part of planning, policy and implementation at all stages and levels of development. Points that relate to gender equality were raised in the consultation process by women, and by international agencies such as OXFAM, including the need for more defined and better prioritised positioning of gender strategies. For example, under the pillar of Economic Growth, the endorsed Pacific Plan did not contain any specific references to gender. OXFAM had argued the Economic Growth section of the Pacific Plan was simultaneously the weakest section and potentially the most important, citing poor consultation processes in the development stage as a weakening factor. Furthermore, they argued that it contained no ‘analytical framework’ for the economic growth it aimed to achieve, or for whom growth would benefit; and it neglected to consolidate a real purpose in its goals (Coates 2006, 2-3). Elevating gender parity to a more prominent and visibly accountable position in this pillar of the Pacific Plan could have highlighted the commitment of the PIF to a genuine desire for eliminating gender disparity in the region. Other examples can be found under each of the pillars and this raises the question of how the implementation of the Plan has proceeded within the constraints of gender mainstreaming (Morriss 2009, 11-15).

At the time of consultation on the final draft the Gender issues Adviser urged women to be proactive in ensuring that gender was given due status in the final document (Hung 2005, 1). Hung argued that, in 2004, PIF leaders had agreed to address low levels of gender equality and furthermore that PIF acknowledged that Pacific institutions and processes were not as gender sensitive as they should be. She noted the importance of gender as a ‘crosscutting issue in the Pacific Plan’ stating that as it would ‘essentially be the high policy vision’ for the region, it would therefore to a large extent guide the work of the PIF Secretariat’ (Hung 2005, 1).

**Identifying Progress**

Early signs from reporting on the first three years of implementation of the Pacific Plan indicate that assessment of how women’s concerns are being addressed is a complex process. There is also a lack of documentation of the evidence presented in specific areas. This silence highlights one of the difficulties faced when gender mainstreaming is used as a stand-alone tactic for implementation. Without specific reference points to the relationship between mainstreaming and gender issues, reporting on gender is very much dependent on the audience’s understanding of, and commitment to, its philosophies and principles. Reports filed to date, those from 2006-2008, show that gender can be easily buried in the rhetoric of the document. In 2006, the July report stated that under the Pacific Plan, gender initiatives will be ‘monitored and evaluated’ for their contributions to improving gender equality (PIFS 2006a:7). It flagged the need for improving statistical data on gender and collaboration with regional agencies such as UNIFEM, the Pacific Women’s Bureau (PWB) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). PWB has since been merged into a new entity, the Human Development Program (HDP) which is part of the Social Resources Division of the South Pacific Community (CETC). The CETC also now incorporates the former Cultural Affairs Program and the Pacific Youth Bureau. These data were needed in order to establish gender indicators, to support national census planning, to advance implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and for gender budgeting initiatives. The 2006 annual report then restated this as ‘on gender issues, the Secretariat has enhanced collaboration with key development partners such as the SPC Women’s Bureau, UNIFEM, UNDP, AusAID and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to accelerate implementation.
of regional gender commitments’ (PIFS 2006b:4) and then omitted further details on what form of collaboration had occurred or what had been the outcomes of such endeavours.

While it may be that these initiatives were progressing, subsequent six-monthly and annual reports on the Pacific Plan from 2007-2008 also failed to include any previously promised monitoring and evaluation outcomes. The 2007 reports, both six-monthly and annual respectively, stated ‘Reports received indicate, as with other pillars, that progress has varied with the implementation of initiatives under the sustainable development pillar over 2007’ (PIFS 2007a:6; 2007b,13). This may well have been so, but failing to provide more detailed information reduces the visibility of progress and thus raises questions over accountability. Gender was not discussed at all in either the 2008 reports.

There is a clear need for more extensive research and reporting on questions surrounding what is happening, and to what extent gender equality programs have proven successful. Some actions have been visible including initiatives undertaken by Pacific regional and in-country agencies, and through support from Australia in the area of women’s leadership and development programs. A number of these initiatives link easily with the goals of the Pacific Plan. PIFS convened the Sub-Regional Workshop on Special Measures for Women in Port Moresby during September 2008 with the aim to raise awareness on special measures such as reserved seats and quotas with the end goal of addressing the issue of women’s representation in Pacific parliaments.

With funding from Australia, at the same time they also launched the Guide to Campaigning for Pacific Women, under the Advancement of Women’s Representation and the Pursuit of Gender Equality in Pacific Parliaments Project. Also, the extensive research carried out under the Good Governance pillar of the Pacific Plan resulted in the publication by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat of Land and women: the matrilineal factor: the cases of the Republic of Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (Teo 2008). This research was ‘aimed at contributing a gendered perspective to the current regional focus on land issues and reform, particularly initiatives such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat’s Land Management and Conflict Minimisation for Peace, Prosperity and Sustainable Development project (LMCM) and AusAID’s Pacific Land Program (Huffer 2008, vii). Other initiatives included the establishment of a Human Security Framework. The Framework explored aspects of human security such as unemployment, rising crime levels, natural disasters, HIV and explicit gender security issues such as gender-based violence. Further research was also conducted under the Security pillar of the Pacific Plan to produce a review of gender dimensions of land based conflict in the Pacific (Nelson, 2008), a topic that has a particular poignancy for women in Bougainville and the Solomon Islands given their recent histories with violent conflict. More importantly the HDP at SPC is currently undertaking a stocktaking of country capacities to implement gender mainstreaming which will be completed in 2010 and should contain valuable insights into how the implementation of the Pacific Plans’ gender mainstreaming strategy could be realistically carried out.

Examples of Australian initiatives that supported the objectives and goals of the Pacific Plan have centred on training women in political leadership. During 2006-07, Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) working in the Pacific region, who were signatories to the Australian Council for International Development Code of Conduct, were invited to apply for funding, limited to initiatives in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands or East Timor, to build on existing activities that promoted women’s participation in leadership and decision-making roles. Overall grants totaled $162,199 across nine projects. During 2008, two significant training workshops were held in Australia, with the focus on preparing potential candidates and their support staff for future election campaigning. In Cairns, during September 2008, the Australian Labor Party’s International program convened a week-long ‘Campaign Training School for Women (Asia-Pacific)’ and ANU held a two day ‘Women in Politics: Train the Trainer’ course in November 2008. Overall, more than forty regional women benefited from the two programs. In 2008, the Australian Government also pledged to provide $AUD6.2 million for a women’s leadership program in the Pacific over a five year period in partnership with the UN Development Fund for Women. The aim was identified as seeking to achieve gender equality in developing countries by training women at a local level in governance and leadership issues, undertaking research on the barriers and successful pathways to women’s leadership and developing communication and training materials for use in the region (McMullan 2009).

Out of the Shadows

The Pacific Plan was designed to be a living document able to fluidly reflect, and change with, the needs of Pacific people. Pacific women have been well placed to advise on the Pacific Plan with a rich history of engagement in advancing not only the status of women, but also in monitoring, evaluating and advocating for issues concerning environment, health, land rights and others. When a collective submission was drafted for the consultation process prior to the implementation of the Pacific Plan, it noted numerous concerns women had over security, governance, sustainable development and economic growth. When OXFAM made its submission to
the Pacific Plan Task Force it too reiterated the need for a higher degree of prioritisation of gender equality than was evident in the preliminary draft. OXFAM wanted the Pacific Plan to attract credibility at national, regional, and international levels. The final draft did not fully reflect the recommendations that had been made and this has proved somewhat problematic in view of gaps in gender accountability in relation to reporting processes. Gender equality issues did not receive stand-alone, high-priority status; rather they were incorporated through gender mainstreaming by integrating gender into the policy broadly and subject to national interpretations. This was in effect relegating gender to a very subjective position by relying on individual nations to implement policy and to take steps to include gender aware strategies. As it is beyond the capacity of many small nations to provide expertise or financial support for such programs this becomes a somewhat ad hoc approach. Gender mainstreaming, as a policy at regional level, may even hinder the advancement of women’s concerns. It is the responsibility of the PIF to ensure through its own review processes that this does not eventuate, and that the needs, rights and concerns of Pacific women and men are respected and protected if indeed the overall aim to strengthen cooperation and integration is to be realised.

Significant initiatives have been undertaken and implemented, emanating from within the Pacific and from Australia in support of the region. These should be acknowledged as fitting the profile of the Pacific Plan objectives even though the official reporting mechanisms of the Pacific Plan do not seem to be paying adequate attention to the recording of such initiatives. If one digs deeply enough in the archives and in the public domain it may well be that women have been benefiting from standing under the shade of the Pacific Plan pillars, but it would be marvellous if all the good work was brought out of the shadows and paid due respect by being included in the reporting process.

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Living in the moment
Let there be
No more living in denial on this Earth,
No more breathing as a burden
But a bringer of birth,
Living in the moment,
Every instant a truth,
Living in the now of eternal youth.
For what is here, What is lost, what is found,
The purity of innocence, sanctified ground.
We came to touch the essence, the very core,
Fundamental, elemental, evermore.

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Mining Company Clashes with PNG Government

On 29 May 2008, the Australian mining company Frontier Resources was told by the Papuan New Guinean Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Mining, Dr. Puka Temu, that the company’s application for renewal of its Exploration License (EL1348) had been refused. While the refusal cost the company over $AUD3 million already spent on exploration over the previous four years – in compliance with the PNG Mining Act – it was the lost future income which would hurt the company’s share price. Frontier Resources had identified ‘a very significant’ source of copper, gold, silver and the transition metal molybdenum in an area known as the ‘Kodu Deposit’. The company expected that over the ten-year life of the deposit (2012-2022) a profit of $USD3 billion would be returned after an investment of $USD742 million (Frontier Resources 2007). Through taxes, royalties and direct equity it had also been estimated that the PNG national treasury would have benefited to the sum of K6 billion (McNeil 2008).

Why had the revenue-conscious PNG government scuppered an apparently lucrative mining deal, which enjoyed local community support? Dr. Temu advised the Company that after a recommendation from the National Executive Council it had been decided that blocking the renewal was ‘in the national interest’ (Australian Stock Exchange, 2008) given the potential threats mining the Kodu Deposit posed to Port Moresby’s future water and power supplies, and to the country’s heritage and tourism industry. Frontier Resource’s Chief Executive Officer, Peter McNeil, had been anticipating the bad news for some time. The environmental concerns – which to his mind had been dismissed by a Frontier Resource-commissioned independent environmental study – were a smoke screen to disguise the real reason for the licence’s termination. Moreover, despite Frontier Resource’s insistence that the decision was ‘for the sovereign nation of Papua New Guinea to determine with all stakeholders’ legal rights, commercial aspirations and moral outcomes/desires taken into consideration,’ (Frontier Resources 2007) McNeil knew a foreign third party had been asserting its influence over the PNG Government to ensure the termination of the license. When the decision finally came he was convinced it was ‘a direct result of intervention’ by this third party (McNeil 2008).

The third party was the Australian Government. The issue that was exercising Canberra’s concern and which was perceived by McNeil as the true motivation for the rejection of EL1348’s renewal, was the impact of the proposed mine on the ‘Kokoda Trail’, the 96km walking track that runs from the outskirts of Port Moresby, across the Owen Stanley Ranges to the northern Papuan village of Kokoda. It is a site of great Australian historical significance (Lindsay 2002). During the Pacific War, in an effort to protect their left flank in the Netherlands East Indies, and cut the lines of communication between the United States and Australia, Japanese forces sought to secure the Australian colony of Papua, the mandated territory of New Guinea, and the so-called ‘Solomon’s Chain’. Along with the Battle of Milne Bay, the Kokoda Campaign prevented the Japanese from capturing the Papuan capital, Port Moresby, and in conjunction with Allied victories in the battles of the Coral Sea and Guadalcanal, was instrumental in thwarting Japanese ambitions in the Southwest Pacific (Bell, Brawley and Dixon 2005).

Since the 1990s ‘Kokoda’ (the phrase in Australia usually refers to the campaign in 1942 and the Trail, rather than...

Who Owns the Kokoda Trail? Australian Mythologies, Colonial Legacies and Mining in Papua New Guinea

SEAN BRAWLEY AND CHRIS DIXON

In recent years ‘Kokoda’ has assumed an increasingly significant place in popular Australian memory and mythology, sometimes rivaling Gallipoli in importance. With thousands of Australians now walking the Kokoda Trail each year, a trekking industry has developed that is dominated by Australian companies. Whilst those companies provide employment for locals in Papua New Guinea, their interests do not always mesh with those of mining companies seeking to exploit the region’s natural resources. The ensuing debates about mining and tourism reflect immediate commercial interests, as well as deeper questions about who ‘owns’ the Kokoda Trail.
the Oro province town) has gained an increasingly important place in Australian memory and mythology (Nelson, 1997, 2003 & 2007). By the end of the decade it had been constructed as ‘sacred ground,’ (McGauran 1997) and had become a well-known national story that rivalled Gallipoli in its importance. Reflecting this deeper engagement, ‘trekking’ the Kokoda Trail became an increasingly popular undertaking in the early 21st century. In 2001, only 76 Australians crossed the trail (Stanley 2008). It is estimated that over 7,000 ‘pilgrims’ will make the journey in 2009 (Bryant 2009). The rise in the number of trekkers has also seen the development of a trekking industry dominated largely by Australian companies that sub-contract some of their business to local PNG companies.

Following the bilateral crisis of 2005 between the Australian and Turkish governments over road works at ANZAC Cove, Bart Ziino traced the long history of Australian engagement with that site and asked: ‘Who owns Gallipoli?’ (Ziino 2006). This paper asks the same question of the Kokoda Trail in light of the growing Australian engagement with the Trail since the early 1990s and the Australian government’s involvement in the events surrounding the PNG government’s decision concerning EL1348. The Kokoda case is more complicated and contentious than Gallipoli, principally because Australians assert a sense of ownership that is not based solely on a desire for the site’s preservation because of sacrifice and loss endured in war. Kokoda was once Australian territory and this colonial legacy continues to shape the ways Australians engage with the Trail. Furthermore, it is timely to ask whether the Australian government’s actions surrounding EL1348 are another example of an Australian neo-colonialist foreign policy agenda in the Pacific, called ‘the new interventionism’ by Sinclair Dinnen. (Dinnen 2004) That the Kokoda Trail is inhabited by communities whose state of development maintains striking similarities to the same communities that were dislocated by war in 1942 is another complication. While Australia’s Kokoda mythology makes strong and enduring connections between the nation and the ‘Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels’ – indigenous carriers who moved Australian supplies and wounded up and down the track – the Australian government’s role in the rejection of EL1348’s renewal raises questions about whether protecting Australians’ engagement with the Kokoda myth entails a cost to the Koiari and Orokaiva peoples, the traditional owners of the region, retain a subsistence economy augmented by income from a growing tourism industry. Communities strongly support the protection of the historical and natural values of the Track and proudly demonstrate their culture (UNESCO 2009).

The battle for the hearts and minds of the communities along the Kokoda Trail was an important part of the struggle for EL1348. In the public debate, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Australian trekking company operators on one side, and Frontier Resources on the other, all claimed to be representing the true interests of local communities. All these protagonists, moreover, felt emboldened to speak on behalf of the indigenous communities. The WWF in its support for the Kokoda Foundation’s master plan, observed in October 2006, that any mine would be constructed against the wishes of the local community. Michael Avosa, Country Program Manager for WWF-PNG, acknowledged that ‘PNG communities have a right to earn income from their land’, but spoke out against mining. ‘[M]any landowners on the Track,’ he wrote, ‘are afraid of pollution, social change and the damage to tourism that would come from a mine’ (WWF 2006). The Australian-drafted request for World Heritage protection for the Trail that sits on UNESCO’s website makes only passing mention of the Australian significance of the track and implies the communities of the Trail are the main drivers for the listing:

Koiari and Orokaiva peoples, the traditional owners of the region, retain a subsistence economy augmented by income from a growing tourism industry. Communities strongly support the protection of the historical and natural values of the Track and proudly demonstrate their culture (UNESCO 2009).

Opponents of the mine were quick to link EL1348 to the troubled history of mining in PNG. The proposed Mount Kodu mine, it was contended, would be an environmental disaster along the lines of Ok Tedi. The WWF noted in 2006 that the Kokoda foundation’s master plan set ‘out a clear process to help them [local communities] avoid an Ok Tedi or a Bougainville disaster in the middle of the
The proposed mine at Mt Kodu is a very large, but low grade mineral deposit. The only way it could successfully function is with a massive open pit mine, with massive through put and enormous amount of wastes to be managed and disposed of. As a comparison the proposed mine is not unlike Ok Tedi (Weatherall 2008).

The implication that Frontier Resources was engaged in ‘enclave mining’ also contributed to negative perceptions of the company, and the project, that extended beyond the environmental concerns. Kokoda Track Authority (KTA) spokesperson Norris Selu observed: ‘The government’s past experience is the mining companies come and go and have left damage ... so they are aware of this and don’t want the landowners to sign any agreements before an environment impact study is complete’ (West Australian, 7 February 2008). The former President of the New South Wales Returned and Services League (RSL) Rusty Priest, commented: ‘If you look at what happens when you put a mine in the centre of something. I think Bougainville and Ok Tedi are good examples - for a while they will reap the benefits of money, but then what happens when you’re left with a hole in the ground and all these ecosystems around destroyed?’ (ABC News 2006). Priest’s statement hinted at the long-standing sense of obligation felt by many Australians toward the people of PNG. This sense of obligation had developed even as the battles raged along the Kokoda Trail, when Australian servicemen had been quick to express their appreciation for the Papuan carriers, and demand that their service should be properly recognized. In March 1943, the Australian Army educational and news journal SALT carried a ‘Salute to Boong’:

The debt we owe them cannot be discharged with less than the resolve that they and all native peoples under our charge, shall share fully in the fruits of victory. To do less would be to mock Australians soldiers, who in their thousands honour and respect the black stalwarts who shared their peril and whose great shoulders counted no sacrifice too high for their taubada brothers (SALT 1943).

It has been suggested by both Australian and PNG commentators that independence in 1975 was a form of recognition for the service of the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels during the Pacific War. That recognition had a long lineage. Referring to the Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs, which upon its founding in 1943 had helped establish many of the pre-conditions for post-war reconstruction and eventual independence, Geoffrey Gray has suggested that ‘Underlying this reforming zeal was a sense of gratitude to the indigenous people of Papua New Guinea’ (Gray 2000, 197). In the dedication prefacing his short story about the Trail and native carriers, PNG author Nash Sorariba reflected a similar belief: ‘Dedicated to the likes of Napa and my old people who showed commitment and loyalty and asked for no reward in return. Today we have a flag and a song: thank you ever so much’ (Sorariba 1997, 1). By the time of the late twentieth century, however, the sense of mutual gratitude that had developed out of the tense days of 1942 did not go unchallenged. Characteristic of almost every former colonial relationship, the vexatious issues of political independence joined with equally contentious debates concerning economic independence.

In Papua New Guinea, these debates centred frequently on the control and exploitation of natural resources. References to Bougainville and Ok Tedi were powerful when asserting an indigenous perspective because the history of those mines was associated with the PNG government allying itself with Australian mining companies to secure outcomes that were in defiance of the wishes of local stakeholders. Such a strategy, however, ignored the significant changes that had been forced upon the mining industry in PNG following the controversies at Bougainville and Ok Tedi, particularly the relations between mining companies and local communities (Zillman et al, 2002 and Thompson 1998). For Australian mining companies the Native Title or Eddie Mabo decision in 1992 had also played a part in changing the ways they engaged with local communities (Howitt 2001).

Reflecting these new realities, in selling the Kodu Deposit to the market, Frontier Resources had been quick to emphasise that it was ‘blazing a new trail of social responsibility and landowner engagement’. The name of the deposit was changed from ‘Ofi Creek’ to ‘Kodu’ to ‘reflect the local people’s name for their hill’ (McNeil 2006). The ‘centrepiece’ of the agreement between the company and landowners was a ‘partnership’ with landowners that would see them become five per cent equity partners in the proposed mine with the equity carried to production, and the landowner’s pro-rated capital expenditure repaid from their pro-rated mine profits. It was claimed that the company had ‘100% land owner support’ for the realisation of the mine.
In 2006, when concerns were raised about Frontier Resource’s activities, Peter McNeil was quoted in the Australian media as suggesting: ‘There’s a lot of resentment along the trail on the Australian attitude to the trail … I think we have to be very careful about how we handle this issue because it has the potential to blow up and cause trouble for people trekking along the trail’ (ABC News, 29 September, 2006). These assertions of landowner sentiment were reiterated in the company’s December 2007 quarterly report: ‘Landowners have stated that mining at Kodu and tourism on the Kokoda Track should proceed harmoniously together for the benefit of all stakeholders, however, they also strongly note ‘NO EXPLORATION AND MINING AT KODU – NO TOURISM ON THE KOKODA TRACK’ (Frontier Resources 2007). Those contradictory positions complicated Frontier’s task of presenting itself as a pioneer of socially and environmentally sound mining practices.

Responding to his company’s failure to secure legal redress for the PNG Government’s decision, Peter McNeil observed that the Australian government had denied the development rights of local landowners: ‘It’s an attempt to force our Australian attitude in relation to a particular battle on to private landowners or clans that actually own the Kokoda Trail and who are in desperate need of development’. Having lost ‘their best chance in generations’ to secure their future they had been compelled to embrace tourism and trekking, for which they received ‘diddly-squat’:

I do not believe that the diggers who served on the trail would support making the trail into a memorial to their efforts as opposed to allowing the people to attempt to better themselves using the natural resources they are blessed enough to have (The Age, 29 September 2006).

Addressing the World Heritage nomination, Frontier Resources suggested that the communities along the trail would be relegated to a ‘cultural zoo’ (McNeil 2008), unable to develop their natural resources to their advantage and without sufficient compensation from the developed world for that sacrifice. That the Australian government had used environmental concerns as an argument to protect the Trail when the growing popularity of trekking was having a deleterious environmental impact had also been observed. Some trekking operators have expressed concern that the use of environmental concerns to drive the Trail’s protection might diminish its historical significance and its necessary development to support the communities on the Trail and the industry. The PNG government’s willingness to succumb to Australian pressure over Kokoda, motivated by the desire to improve what had become a ‘toxic’ bilateral relationship (Sydney Morning Herald, 7 March 2008), may also have a wider, long-term impact. The PNG government, through its alleged ‘expropriation’, has diminished its own international standing, and its ability to manage its own commercial affairs and economic autonomy. The ‘perception of sovereign risk for Papua New Guinea’, Frontier claimed, ‘has increased markedly. The Australian Government’s actions have made it even more risky to do business with our closest neighbouring country’ (McNeil 2008).

In the early 21st century the mining industry has thus emerged as the unlikely defender of the rights of less-developed nations, against the neo-colonial attitudes and policies of western governments. An editorial in the international Gold Gazette noted in June 2008: ‘The behaviour of both Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and his predecessor John Howard over the proposal by Frontier Resources … has smacked of opportunism and paternalism’. The editorial continued on to lament Rudd’s ‘neo-colonialist bent’ (McNeil 2008). The analysis is accurate. But given the mining industry’s long history of exploiting such conditions to its own advantage it is difficult to gauge the genuineness of such sentiments.

In 2006, when John Howard had first voiced his disapproval of any plans to allow mining along the Trail, a letter-writer to the Melbourne Age noted: ‘So John Howard is upset that they want to mine the Kokoda Trail as this is sacred ground. But mining Kakadu is OK because that is not sacred ground, (because no diggers died) just 40,000 years of our heritage, not to mention an environmental wonder’ (The Age, October 2, 2006). Another letter writer made a similar observation concerning the Western Australian Government and Woodside Energy’s plans for the Barrup Peninsula in WA’s Pilbara. The threat to the thousands of rock carvings led to the area being listed on the New York-based World Monument Fund’s list of the world’s 100 most endangered monuments (The Age, 2 October 2006). Examples such as these underscore the charge of Australian government hypocrisy, as evidenced by its actions to scuttle EL1348. Such perceptions have been further reinforced by ongoing tensions between local landowners along the Trail and Australian and PNG authorities (PNG Post-Courier, 8 January 2009). In May 2009, twelve months after a bilateral agreement was signed to ‘protect’ the track and support eco-tourism as the sustainable economic future for the communities of the Trail, local landowners felt sufficiently frustrated by the continuing delays to the start of the project that they again closed the Trail (PNG Post-Courier, 8 May 2009). Much anger has been directed at the increasingly Australian-dominated Kokoda Track Authority. One local spokesman observed: ‘The landowners are trying
to get rid of the new management team, basically the Australians running the KTA ... They need to come down into the community, to relax and realize this is PNG, not Australia.' (PNG Post-Courier, 8 May 2009). Cultural conflicts, reflecting Australians' ethnocentric approaches to development (Toft 1997), continue in the tourism industry long after the Bougainville and Ok Tedi crises had first raised these concerns for the mining industry.

The sometimes-passionate debates over mining rights and tourism on the Kokoda Trail reflect far more than short-term financial considerations. Informed by a deepening Australian mythology which perpetuates an obligation to the indigenous inhabitants of Papua New Guinea, and a determination to repay the debt of an earlier generation, all participants in the debates about future development along the Trail have claimed to have history on their side. Moreover, while Australian protagonists in those debates professed to be acting in the best interests of those who lived and worked along the Kokoda Trail, to varying degrees, all betrayed a neo-colonial sense of paternalism that said much about the persistence of colonial legacies and Orientalist assumptions, long after Papua New Guinea achieved independence. Whoever won the battle for EL1348, the answer to the question of ‘Who Owns the Kokoda Trail?’ would not have changed: Australians assert ownership of the Trail and show little inclination of wanting to hand it back to the communities they have vowed to ‘protect’.

References

Anon., nd., ‘Salute to Boong’, SALT
The Way it Goes

Survivors,

immobile at home or in The Home

moving phantom forces

while still in full retreat,

charting their deterioration

between pills and ointments,

remaking past decisions

or nursing disappointments

forgetting prompts or props

and awaiting what is left

like dumb beasts in a pen

or in fear of the final summons,

while disparate thoughts contend

colliding in linguistic codes

collapsing without conclusions.

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Authors

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Chris Dixon is Associate Professor and Coordinator of the Arts Faculty’s Cultural History Project at the University of Queensland. Chris walked the Kokoda Trail with his son in September 2009. In collaboration with Prudence Ahrens, he is currently co-editing Coast to Coast: Case Studies in Modern Pacific Crossings (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, forthcoming 2010).
Māori Social Entrepreneurialism as a Model for Australia’s Development Assistance in the Southwest Pacific

Paul D’Arcy

This article evaluates the problems associated with Australian aid policy and practice to various Pacific nations and proposes an alternative model based on New Zealand Māori kin-based distribution of resources as offering culturally-appropriate benefits.

Introduction

Australia has dramatically increased its aid and attention towards its Pacific Island neighbours since 2000 as mounting internal problems in the region led to fears that they would soon become failed states. A predominantly Australian regional force intervened militarily to restore order in Solomon Islands in 2003 at the invitation of the Solomon Island Government. A smaller regional operation helped to restore order in Tonga after rioting destroyed much of the commercial centre of the Tongan capital Nuku’alofa in 2006. While peace was soon restored in both cases, the solution for rectifying the factors underlying the tensions is now perceived by Australian authorities to be an extensive period of intensified development assistance. In 2002, the year before the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), Australia’s aid commitment to Solomon Islands was $33 million. In 2003-2004, aid to Solomon Islands jumped to $140 million, then $180 million in 2004-2005, $234 million in 2005-2006, and $223 million in 2006-2007 (Dobell 2007: 11). The election victory of an Australian Labor Government in late 2007 raised expectations that the new Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, would implement the principles outlined in his Port Moresby Declaration of March 2008, jointly with PNG Prime Minister Michael Somare, which announced that this increased commitment of aid to the Pacific would also be accompanied by a new era of greater cooperation and dialogue between Australia and its neighbours in the southwest Pacific.

The independent states of the southwest Pacific have inherited somewhat arbitrary bases for nationhood that bear little resemblance to their inhabitants’ usual spheres of interaction during millennia of occupation of this region. The Pacific Island states to Australia’s immediate north and northeast vary considerably in size from just over 215,000 in Vanuatu to approximately 6.1 million in Papua New Guinea. A variety of languages is spoken within each nation state and the kin-based identity is the dominant affiliation of most citizens. Most inherited limited infrastructure from their colonial rulers and since independence have been unable to provide the transport, educational, health and economic facilities needed to make their citizens willing and able to operate as citizens of a modern state. Most people still practice essentially highly localised traditional economies (previously known as subsistence lifestyles) occasionally supplemented by cash crops. Despite poor communications and at times tense relations between social groups, a sizable minority of the population now travels beyond their kin group area to work in the modern economy, especially in national capitals or large multinational undertakings such as oil palm plantations and mine sites. These sites are sources of both identity formation and tension. While a new class-based urban identity has begun to take place in cities such as Noumea, Port Vila, Honiara, Port Moresby and Suva, many if not most migrants to cities rely upon wantoks – networks who speak the same language and share cultural origins.

There is still much debate within Australia about how to best assist Pacific Island states overcome their problems, and about nurturing the capacity of Pacific Island states to rectify their own problems. Many scholars still publish gloomy prognoses about the ability of states within the so-called ‘Arc of Instability’ to Australia’s immediate north to make significant economic advances and secure political stability without external assistance. This group includes commentators such as Susan Windybank from the Centre for Independent Studies and Ben Reilly from the Australian National University. While many Australian policy makers subscribe to the belief that external assistance is needed to resolve Pacific Island nations’ problems, the majority of academic specialists on the Pacific have rejected or called for serious modification of the Arc of Instability paradigm. The most comprehensive publication arguing along these lines is Hank Nelson’s ‘Governments, States and Labels’ (Nelson 2006). Those
questioning the Arc of Instability paradigm urge more acknowledgement of the highly inadequate preparation for independence that these nations inherited from colonial powers like Australia and are therefore less willing to blame flawed government practices and corruption since independence for today's problems. They are also more cautious about the efficacy of applying foreign models to Pacific problems, emphasising the mediation of local church groups and integration of traditional dispute mechanisms into conflict resolution and development agendas. Broadly speaking these conflicting paradigms still dominate debate on the delivery of Australian assistance to the southwest Pacific. Australia faces a major decision about its Pacific policies. It can either increase its aid and apply conditions to that aid in an attempt to persuade or otherwise influence Pacific Island governments to adopt policies Australia sees as best for the region, or it can seek to work cooperatively with Pacific Island governments to deliver development that benefits Islanders and preserves all parties' national interests through a degree of compromise. Both Australian and Pacific Island governments must also involve local government and local communities in the development process in circumstances where the influence and impact of central government are generally limited away from national capitals.

Australia's New Aid Policy
Australia has to prepare itself for a Pacific region over which it has less, not more, influence, given the problems that beset many of Australia's Pacific neighbours, the costs of recent Australian interventions and aid programs in the Pacific, and significant increases in East Asian aid to the Pacific Islands. The cost and difficulties involved in operations in Solomon Islands, Bougainville, and East Timor alone suggest Australia cannot go it alone in securing stable, friendly, and prosperous Pacific Island neighbours.

The aims of the Australian development assistance program as outlined in the Port Moresby Declaration seek to create growth economies built on sustainable exploitation of their substantial mineral, timber and marine resources which will fund significant improvements in health and education infrastructure in combination with Australian aid. It is implied, but not openly stated, that these processes will reduce the amount of aid required from Australia over time as well as securing friendly, stable and prosperous neighbouring nation states. The means of achieving these goals are through partnerships of development between individual Pacific Island national governments and the Government of Australia. This primary focus on government to government interaction means that Australia places great emphasis on improved governance and service delivery from recipient governments in the Pacific Islands. Particular emphasis is to be placed on improving economic infrastructure and access to microfinance to enhance private sector development. This improved infrastructure will allegedly create more local employment through the construction of infrastructure and new business opportunities this infrastructure allows. Non-governmental players are also given a role within this essentially government-focused plan, particularly in basic service delivery and less clearly articulated roles in enhancing governance, presumably either as watchdogs or perhaps as representatives on decision-making bodies.

Reform of government is a key concern in the wider literature on enhancing Australia's aid delivery. The main themes promoted have been curbing corruption through greater accountability and transparency in government operations (Larmour & Barcham 2005, Hill, 2004), and cutting the public sector to reduce the large share of the budget made up of public sector salaries. Government cutbacks are another issue. Presumably, those public servants laid off from government can be absorbed within the robust private sector the plan seeks to develop. Otherwise, they will have to rely on the support of kin or re-enter the traditional economy of their home communities.

A Road Less Travelled: Blending the Old with the New
While Pacific Island economies may benefit from elements of the modern free market economy, other economic options offer perhaps greater promise, while the modification of existing social institutions offer a more effective, and possibly less disruptive means of achieving economic modernity than other solutions which seek to 'fast track' modernity by grafting modern western institutions onto islander societies. It is an approach that emphasizes social connections which break down the national-local divide, localised control over development processes, and combining the subsistence strengths of local social unit economies with the greater resource base available to those locals who engage with the greater national and global economy.

Ironically, perhaps the best medium for enhancing the lives of Pacific Island populations may be one of the oldest and most enduring institutions – kin groups that now increasingly combine highly localised affinities with geographically expanded worldviews. The view that traditional institutions are barriers to progress pervades much development literature. They can be, but are not intrinsically so. Alternative strategies, patterns and practices used elsewhere in the South Pacific offer viable options that modify the conventional economic model brought into question above and play to the strengths of southwest Pacific societies used since the dawn of time, that have worked, continue to work, and perhaps
offer the best hope for future stability, self-sufficiency and relative prosperity.

While kin groups can become divided by bitter disputes over resource development opportunities on their lands, they still have much to recommend as financial and modernizing units. Direct payments to them or into kin-based trust funds would put money directly in the hands of the local communities it is targeted for. Such groups are a vibrant, coherent and enduring element of civil society that has great potential, but which is often overlooked. Larmour and Barcham (...) recommend the use of NGOs and civil society groups to act as forces promoting government accountability, and exotl the virtues of small entities as units working against corruption because of the intimate familiarity of those within the group and the shame connected with stealing from relatives. This reallocation of funds would also mean that there is less in government coffers to tempt corrupt officials. It is easier to detect loss in smaller grants, and there is less money to skim off beyond that needed to fulfill minimum requirements.

Political parties are also seen as good mechanisms for accountability (Larmour & Barcham 2005, 11). In the absence of nation-wide political parties across much of Melanesia, extended kin groups whose collective interests increasingly extend beyond their territorial units have an important role to play in this regard. Based on an affluent traditional economy centred on fishing and agricultural sectors, kin groups reach beyond kin, provincial and even national borders by linking internal and external migrants in the modern sector back to kin and localities organised around a combination of subsistence and cash crops.

Pacific Island societies are communal and competitive by nature. Examples abound throughout colonial and modern history of indigenous groups drawing on these strengths of traditional ways to adjust to new circumstances and successfully compete against external ‘market forces’. The example of the New Zealand/Aotearoa iwi (tribe) Ngai Tahu is particularly germane. There are 41,496 Polynesian New Zealanders who classify themselves as Ngai Tahu. They have been recognised as an ‘Iwi Authority’ by government and must be consulted by government over resource management matters in their legally defined rohe (tribal territory). Tribal members are spread across most of New Zealand and beyond, and encompass both rural and urban communities. Ngai Tahu is a legally recognized charitable trust for the purposes of governance and administering its financial matters, balancing traditional concerns with modern business practices. Thus, the Board consists of representatives from each of the 18 traditional regional sub groups comprising Ngai Tahu, but is headed by a CEO, and also employs a Chief Financial Officer. Important decisions are only made after extensive consultations, and much of the iwi’s financial status and policy debates are carried on its website to increase access and transparency (http://www.ngaitahu.iwi.nz). New Zealand’s former Minister of Finance, Michael Cullen, labeled Ngai Tahu’s approach to their economic development and social advancement, a form of ‘social entrepreneurialism’ (Cullen, 2006).

In the late 1990s Ngai Tahu appointed a highly representative ‘Vision Focus Group’ to create a vision of where the tribe might be in 25 years time so that they could start thinking about developing priorities and strategies to achieve these. The website carries the vision and invites feedback as the document is constantly evolving as is the iwi and the conditions it faces. The Ngai Tahu 2025 document, now online, contains a section on investment planning. This section details how Ngai Tahu started with a NZ$30 million Crown Settlement in 1998, but increased its tribal equity to NZ$270 million by 2001, through a combination of government asset transfers and astute financial management (Ngati Tahu 2025).

While this well-developed Ngai Tahu model may not be immediately applicable to other localities in the southwest Pacific, it provides an alternative vision of economic development and empowerment based on a Pacific Island example, modified and working effectively after years of practical application, experimentation and internal debate. It would be wrong to simply apply this model elsewhere in the Pacific Islands without modification – to do so would be to repeat the mistakes of the past in seeking to graft outside models on to the Pacific, and to ignore the diversity inherent within the Pacific Islands in terms of cultural organization, values and levels of engagement with the national and global cash economies. However, this model is less of a ‘foreign flower’ (Larmour 2005) than many western models as it combines modern business practices, kin organisation, communal decision-making, and the balance of territorial and kin affiliation that the mobility inherent in the global economy forces upon populations.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of the kin corporation model is psychological rather than economic. Stable and broad-based modernity is still the ultimate objective, but here it is achieved by acknowledging what is good and admirable in Pacific cultures rather than seeking to remove perceived barriers and introduce new governance structures. Change comes from within and more on the terms of Islanders themselves. By acknowledging what is strong and enduring in Pacific cultures and seeking to work within proven mechanisms, we accept that enduring change only ever comes voluntarily from within.
References


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Day 7 of Heatwave (Jamestown)

Across the stickiest of days
and flyblown week
the sky has carried
the heatwave on its back
as windmills slice the evening into
paddock size shadows
along the horizon
the sunset
burns a fire break line.

JULIE LEIGH KOCH,
SOUTH PLYMPTON, SA
Rotuman Background

Australia is home to a relatively small number of Rotumans. It is not possible to say exactly how many have migrated to Australia since the relaxation and then disbandment of the White Australia Policy because Fijian immigrants to this country are not delineated by ethnic identity. There was a small influx of mainly single Rotuman men into the Torres Strait in the late 19th century attracted by work in the pearling industry. A rough calculation based on interviews places their number in Australia today at around 550 or about 5% of their total world population. Most live in the larger cities in Australia along the eastern seaboard with smaller numbers in towns and country areas. The majority migrated from the 1970s onwards. Rotumans living in Australia today compete favourably with Europeans for employment and their standard of living is similar to that of other Australians. The Rotuman ability to integrate successfully into other cultures has been well documented in work by Alan Howard and Jan Rensel (2001). However, their ability to integrate is only part of the story.

The shift that occurs when Rotuman people change from business suit and tie to t-shirt and lavalava is more than a casual change of pace – it is a return to cultural mores that extend beyond the niceties of assimilation. In their family and extended ethnic group, Rotuman Australians go back to being Rotumans in another land. The English-speaking business executive segues easily into the Rotuman islander with many of the memories, stories and traditions inherent in that culture. The concern for the diaspora, however, is how strong Rotuman culture and identity will be and for how long.

Rotuma is a high island, 43 square kilometres in size, approximately 465 kilometres north of the main islands of Fiji. While Rotuma is a dependency of Fiji it is also a Polynesian outlier whose people form a distinct, recognised ethnic minority in that country. It is ethnically linked, through its origin story, to Samoa and Tonga and to Fiji through pre-European contact trade and social ties as well as cession to Great Britain in the late 19th century. When Fiji was given independence in 1970 Rotumans decided to remain within the Republic as a dependency. Though currently suspended from the Commonwealth due to the 2006 coup, Fiji’s Commonwealth connections make Australia a popular place of emigration along with New Zealand. Rotumans have migrated in similar numbers to the United States of America and are scattered in smaller groups throughout the world.

Diaspora communities by their nature are situated within a wider society in the places where they settle. Risk to traditional culture in Diaspora comes through a wearing away of the sense of community caused by pressures from the mainstream society and these influences come, in the main, through the day to day transactions diaspora members have with those of the wider society —at school and work, in nightclubs, anywhere that non-diaspora members form the majority. When diaspora members marry into the dominant culture or live in widely separate suburbs in large cities the opportunities for coming together with other community members can be difficult and rare. In modern Australian society, as with other western societies, the impetus to attend gatherings can be interrupted by the need to attend to all the other demands of daily life, for example work and children’s sporting activities. Consequently, the reinforcement of cultural mores can be difficult to achieve.

Of the eighteen Rotuman individuals interviewed for this article, eight had met their Australian spouse in Fiji and travelled to Australia with them; four came out to visit or stay with family members already in Australia and the remaining husbands and wives were both Rotuman and came as a family group. Those left behind in Rotuma and Fiji saw the benefits—education, employment, good
health facilities and greater wealth—being enjoyed by their friends and relatives in Australia, and they too began to think about moving. Help with accommodation, food, furniture and integration into the community was offered to new arrivals in true Rotuman fashion (Dickinson interview, Sydney 2003). Young people arriving on their own to pursue their education were billeted with relatives or friends of relatives. In Australia, unlike in the main islands of Fiji, the district boundaries of Rotuma blurred, binding the community closer together. There are seven districts in Rotuma and district identity is important and this can cause divisions in the Rotuman community. In Australia this is not the case and thus members of the diaspora more closely identify with the island as a whole.

The major concern for Rotuman families and communities in Australia is the maintenance of language, values and morality—the understanding of cultural right and wrong—all of which underpin being Rotuman. The idea of Rotuman-ness and the Rotuman ability to maintain their cultural identity is important to the Australian Rotuman elders. Their unease lies mainly with the acculturation of the younger members of the Rotuman community. They see, in peer pressure at school, intermarriage into Australia’s increasingly multicultural society and the death of the cultural repository of the Rotuman-born older generation, a reduction in the ability of the second and later generations of Australian-born Rotumans to maintain the customs of a culture grown in a different land. Already language loss is apparent in Australian-born Rotumans and efforts are being made by older Rotumans to address this loss by making lessons in the Rotuman language available. These have not always been successful or long lasting as parents are increasingly busy at work and other imperatives such as school sporting events encroach on spare time. As well, members of the community do not always live close to one another and this creates time-consuming travel to language lessons (Patresio and Sanerive interviews, Melbourne; Manuelli interviews, Brisbane and Muaror interviews, Sydney 2003). This concern is shared with other Pacific Islander communities in Australia and New Zealand (Macpherson, Spoonley and Anae 2001, 74).

Language is a key element in the bonding of a community. As Kapieni Patresio, a Rotuman in Melbourne said, “When you lose your lingo you lose everything” (interview, Melbourne 2003). Languages represent “an extraordinary wealth of human creativity. They contain and express the total ‘pool of ideas’, nurtured over time through heritage, local traditions and customs communicated through local languages” (UNESCO website, accessed 2005). In other words losing the ability to communicate in the language of your native group means the loss of the nuance encapsulated within the culture of that group.

The Brisbane Rotuman community began a series of meetings involving learning the Rotuman language in 2005 and these proved popular. In Sydney, classes in Rotuman language were held over a five to six year period with up to 40 people attending (Dickinson interview, Sydney 2003) but similar classes failed to prosper in Melbourne. The Melbourne community, unlike Sydney, is smaller and widely scattered largely due to the vast sprawl of the city. However, one father of three thought that knowledge of the Rotuman language was so important it was all he spoke to his children at home (Susau interview, Melbourne 2003). In Canberra, a young boy taught himself with the help of this mother and the aid of a Rotuman/English dictionary so that he could write to his grandmother in Rotuma (Bray interview, Canberra 2003).

When Rotumans get together there are often long discussions about relationships and children are always included, because, one way to create a cohesive community in a new land is through common links. Rotuman Australians’ linkages of family and place were easily found, as like most societies without a written language, Rotumans kept in their heads a family tree several generations long and often as wide as six cousins removed. They often had a good idea of the make-up of other people’s families as well. For centuries, knowledge of relationships within groups has been important in ordering society and calculating obligation. For example, relationships are involved in decisions about who to consult to have certain ailments cured or who will loan a pig when it is needed for a ceremony. Knowing who people are and how they fit into society saves one from the acute shame and embarrassment of doing the wrong thing and being teased about it for years. One story that reinforces this idea is that of the family in Oinafa in Rotuma, at the time of the first missionaries, who obtained a box of biscuits. They liked the biscuits so much they saved a few and planted them hoping to get more. A hundred years later and that family are still called the “biscuit planters” (Dickinson interview, Sydney 2003).

Song and dance is part of all important get-togethers in Rotuma, for example Rotuma or Cession Day celebrations, Church conferences, weddings, headstone raisings and visits by dignitaries. Rotuman children are included in these celebrations. The performances usually take place in front of chiefs, dignitaries and invited guests after feasting is concluded. The songs often have a moral and make reference to old myths and legends (Hereniko 1991: 132). The repetitive nature of the chants ensures that the inherent message is relayed in a culture, which traditionally, did not have a written language. The Rotuma Day celebration tells us a great deal about the Rotuman ideas of history and identity.
Rotuma Day is important to the Rotuman people because cession was voluntary—it involved Rotuman agency. It signalled the end of sectarian violence brought about by the animosity between the Catholic and Protestant factions on the island in the late 19th century that, in turn, represented traditional divisions within Rotuman political life. Songs and dances performed told the story of Rotuma and the events of cession. The traditional format of the kato'aaga (celebration) is maintained as closely as possible.

While not all participate, Rotuma Day in Australia is attended by the majority of the Rotuman population, and the celebrations are conducted by both the Sydney and Brisbane communities in May each year. The Melbourne community is too small to do so and their members often travel to Sydney for the occasion. In places like Adelaide in South Australia, they celebrate with a barbecue in a local park, a few drinks and games of various sorts. From time to time, members of other communities visit each other at that time. For example in 1998 sixty-six members of the Brisbane community as well as others from Fiji and California, travelled to Sydney for the weekend to celebrate Rotuma Day with relatives. On that occasion 300 guests watched as the Drummoyne Rotuman Congregation, the Wesley Mission Rotuman Congregation and the Brisbane Rotuman community groups danced the tautoga and listened to the Lalavi band, of seven Rotuman musicians, play Rotuman and Pacific songs and melodies. Pork, chicken and taro were cooked in a traditional koua, or underground oven, and other customary food formed part of the feast. Some participants played the Rotuman card game pasa after the cultural performances while others enjoyed a mak fifisi, or European style dance, until midnight. The next day the celebration ended with a combined church service at the Drummoyne Uniting Church with the visiting minister, Voi Taukave, giving a sermon on “The Stories We Tell Our Children,” followed by a traditional feast of Rotuman food including pork, chicken, fekai (pudding), vai tahoro moa (dish of meat and coconut), ‘ikou (cooked taro leaves) and tipari (banana ‘tea’ thickened with arrowroot) and other dishes. The program and food was as traditional as it could be away from Rotuma itself. Large Rotuma Day celebrations are essentially the same whether they are held in Sydney, Brisbane, Suva or Rotuma.

Christianity in all its forms, from the original Wesleyan Methodists and Roman Catholics to the modern day Assembly of God and the Church of the Latter Day Saints is a very important component of the lives of Rotumans both in Rotuma and overseas. The basic Christian message is more important to most Rotumans than the type of Church they attend. The Rotuman sense of morality has always been in accord with the tenets of Christianity, probably explaining why the latter has been so successful. For example the moral of fairness and “doing the right thing by others” is also apparent in the Rotuman origin legend when Raho discovers Tokaniua’s dried marker placed on a tree near the newer one belonging to Raho to trick him into believing that Tokaniua arrived on the island first. Raho’s angry response was appeased by Hanit e ma’us, the so-called woman of the bush representing the original inhabitants, saving the island from destruction through an appeal to his better nature (Parke 1995,10, 13).

The majority of the members of the Australian Rotuman communities attend church every Sunday. Both the Brisbane and Sydney communities are able to hold a service in Rotuman and this is a particular draw-card. These services provide them with their only opportunity to speak their own language outside their homes. Loss of faith is thus also a very central concern because of the role religion plays in the cohesiveness of the community, particularly in Diaspora. Young people not attending church not only miss out on the important Christian message but also on the community get-together afterwards. That poses the problem of how knowledge of history and appropriate behaviour is passed on. The loss of young people from the active community is also enervating for the older people and is regarded negatively by those who do attend. Indeed the desire of some members of the Rotuman community to keep their associations secular has caused severe tensions to develop from time to time. Other tensions have included the long standing Catholic/Protestant tensions and the appointment of non-Rotuman ministers for the Rotuman community (Fatiaki interview, Canberra 2003).

Activities such as getting together for lunch after the Sunday service are often based around the community and are conducted in a spirit of inclusiveness and enjoyment as well as learning. Once a week Rotumans relax in the company of fellow islanders and enjoy interacting with much joking and banter and that particularly lewd sense of humour commonly heard when even the most quiet and conservative of Rotuman men and women get together (Patresio interview, Melbourne 2003).

Joking discourse is used in both special formal and everyday informal occasions. In the latter sense it is normative, that is, it is used as a counterweight to mediate the tensions caused in the male/female relationship (Mageo 1999, 93). In migration the joking discourse is maintained, providing strong evidence that Rotuman cultural norms continue to flourish. Clan descriptor stories also flourish in the diaspora just as in the island, passing on family history “deflating pomposity and ensuring humility among [the people]” (Hereniko 2000, 81; Muaror interview, Sydney 2003).
Inter-marriage into the wider community brings its own concerns. Not all Australians are comfortable with the tight community life enjoyed by Pacific Islanders. Out-marriage can have its strains. However, most Rotumans interviewed did not automatically see marriage into other cultural groups as a great problem for the continuity of their culture. Many marry those who have similar attitudes and tolerances to family and ethnicity. Interviews conducted with the Rotuman community revealed a number of Rotumans married to Australians, Tuvaluans and Indo-Fijians, amongst others, and all happily mixed in together at barbeques, fundraisers and at church. This is not to say that there are not other Rotumans in Australia who do not attend the community get-togethers, simply that it would appear that the majority do so regardless of whom they marry.

To make sure that children have an understanding of their identity parents tell them stories about Rotuma and what it was like there in “the olden days.” They tell them the myths and legends that are associated with the island. These include the Raho legend, why people visiting Losa should not wear red at dusk and why women relieving themselves outside in certain areas might be entered by the eel spirit and bear his children. Because identity in Oceanic peoples is situated in social groups as well as in physical place, the impact of these stories on Australian Rotuman children is not as strong as on those in Rotuma and the stories do not carry the same set of understandings. Those who can hear the stories in the Rotuman language as well as physically visit the places mentioned and experience the “atmosphere” and Rotuman spirits, come away with a profound sense of their identity and place within the Rotuman culture. To achieve this understanding many Rotuman migrants aspire to take their children back to the island as often as they can.

In situating their children on the island, migrant parents ensure children absorb the nuances of their culture including the spirituality bound up with the notion of place. These spiritual concepts—the presence of atua and the cultural significance of certain creatures, for example eels, sharks and owls, continue to be remembered today in the diaspora as even devout Christians relate stories of their power and exploits in reminiscing about “home” (Manueli interview, Brisbane 2003; Patresio interview, Melbourne 2003).

Understanding Rotuman community life is the key to understanding the Rotumans in Australia. Oceanic peoples see their value and identity in terms of their relationship to their kinship group or clan rather than as individuals. Rotumans in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne have their own associations, as has Adelaide, through which they get together to socialize and raise money for the “folks back home.” Rotuman dances are performed, the language spoken and stories of the island are told, reinforcing the shared memories and planting the first seeds of collective memory in the listening children. Church meetings ensure a weekly opportunity to express their faith in God and to get together socially. The associations as a whole meet less frequently, usually between quarterly and yearly, depending on the enthusiasm of the leadership. The core organisers are often the leaders of the most prominent local group. It is the associations who organise the big events like Rotuma Day or fundraising dinner dances in aid of charity for the island of Rotuma and who thus play the greatest role in keeping the Rotuman collective memory alive in mainland Australia.

The Rotuman community in mainland Australia uses collective memory in a conscious manner. To develop a strong sense of identity the community and its leaders exercise collective memory through group solidarity at times of Christian worship, commemoration of special events and assistance to the home community on the island and in Fiji. Education of the younger members of the overseas Rotuman community in custom, dance, story telling and exposure to Rotuman foodstuffs adds to the strength of their ability to relate to their culture. The importance for some Rotuman families of sending their children to family in Fiji and Rotuma itself speaks volumes about the value they attach to their culture. However, it is unlikely that the strength of collective memory will be enough to maintain the cultural integrity of the Rotuman community in mainland Australia over the long term unless successive generations promote it vigorously once the seed population has passed away. Rotuman migrants and their children in Australia today are very much a minority in a multicultural society. Thus, it is likely that third and fourth generation Australians of Rotuman descent will retain only the more meaningful cultural traits, until they cease to be relevant.

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Interviews, 2003, with Rotuman informants in Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane

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Your Letter

Comes at Christmas
and joins the ones
already in the garage
in a shoe box,
fading like
the dreams of children.

Your words
tell of a bountiful corn crop
and summer dances,
silent birds,
snow-covered fields.

I see your handwriting,
hear you laugh
splashing in the stream, running on yellow leaves
through the naked woods.

Now I know why you cried
in your sleep.

Applause

The Way it Goes
the late
autumn

sun has
finally

got it right
hanging

o so gently
just out

of reach
for applause

its yellow belly
dipping

brilliance

FELIX CALVINO
WEST END, QLD

RORY HARRIS
LARGS BAY, SA
Fiji’s Forgotten People: The Legatees of ‘Blackbirding’

HILARY SUMMY

Most people both outside and inside Fiji are unfamiliar with the background of Fiji Melanesians. The reason for this has perhaps more to do with imperial expediency than accidental oversight. This article draws attention to the plight of this neglected and historically deprived ethnic minority group and examines events that led to its underprivileged status. It reports the well-intentioned but misguided past role of the Anglican Church in assisting the Melanesians. It also investigates recent attempts to improve their dire circumstances through the work of the self-organising Fiji Melanesian Community Development Association.

Introduction

When considering the topic of indentured, or contract, labour in colonial Fiji, Indians immediately come to mind. However, little is known about immigrant Melanesian labourers who preceded the Indians’ arrival. The Melanesians, known as ‘Polynesians’ by the colonials, were the most significant source of plantation labour from their introduction in 1864 until the 1880s when they were gradually outnumbered by Indians in the sugarcane industry. The Melanesians continued to arrive until 1911, working mainly on coconut plantations and in urban development. Their descendants are today known as Fiji Melanesians and they number around 12,000 (Seke interview of Jo Sanegar, 2009) in a total Fiji population of over 800,000 (2007 Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics).

Much has been written about the labour trade in the Pacific and the milieu in which it operated. While most historians agree that the early years of recruitment for the plantation industry were marked by unscrupulous methods, there is much debate about the extent of voluntarism as opposed to force or deception throughout the period. While the term ‘blackbirding’ implies the latter, ‘revisionist’ historians argue that kidnapping was the exception rather than the rule and that Pacific Islanders were willing participants in the labour trade. Regardless of the differing views, the system itself was based on ‘structural violence’, if not overt or physical violence. The Fiji Melanesians themselves use the term ‘blackbirding.’ Many insist their forefathers had been kidnapped. For them it signifies more than a method of recruitment; it symbolizes a legacy of pain, a sense of loss and deep shame.

Background

As occurred in colonial Queensland and other settler societies in the Pacific region, the plantation system was crucial to the economic development of Fiji. Its success, however, depended on an ample supply of cheap labour. Since the availability of indigenous Fijians was not sufficient to meet the demand, planters turned to adjacent islands in Melanesia—predominantly the New Hebrides, Solomon Islands and, to a lesser extent, outlying islands of New Guinea, and Kiribati in Micronesia. From 1864 until Pacific Island indenture ceased in Fiji in 1911, approximately 27,027 contracts were entered into, either voluntarily or involuntarily (Siegel 1985, 47).

A depot in Levuka—Fiji’s then commercial centre on Ovalau island—was the official destination for new recruits during the early phase of the trade. They were then allotted to the planters, who paid for their passage, and were put to work on plantations scattered mostly around the coastal areas of Ovalau, Viti Levu, Taveuni and Rabi. According to an oral source, some recruiting ships made stops at plantations to ‘sell’ their human cargo directly to the planters rather than go through the official channels. In some instances family members were separated and names changed so that they could not be traced. Since there was little regulation of the trade before cession to the British in 1874 the system was subject to abuse (Shlomowitz 1986, 117). Contracts were mostly for a period of three years at a minimum annual wage of £3 (Parnaby 1956, 57; Shlomowitz 1986, 111). At the end of the contract period some labourers stayed on for additional terms, while most were supposedly returned to their home island at the employer’s expense. Repatriation did not always occur, however, especially after the collapse of the cotton boom.
Cotton had dominated Fiji’s plantation industry from the mid 1860s after the American Civil War had disrupted supplies from the American South. The boom came to an end with a decline in demand when traditional supplies were resumed. This contributed to a financial crisis in Fiji during 1873-4 that bankrupted many planters. Many Melanesians were left stranded without a wage or return passage, until Governor Arthur Gordon was forced to intervene (Parnaby 1956, 61-2). At the same time Gordon encouraged further recruitment from Melanesia to provide labour for the bourgeoning sugarcane industry, although he soon turned to India for a more dependable source. While Indian labour predominated in the sugar industry from the early 1880s, the Melanesians were redeployed on coconut plantations, copra having emerged as a staple industry along with sugar.

The authoritarian and coercive nature of plantation life has been well documented (Munro 1993, 11-19; Corris 1973, 70-3; Parnaby 1972, 140; Frazer 1981, 105-114). As well as outright violence by some owners and managers, living conditions were substandard, long hours were expected and food was often limited and of poor quality. Medical facilities proved insufficient to cope with frequent illnesses which, along with a lack of preventative measures, undoubtedly caused many unnecessary deaths. However, as Schalomowitz has noted (1986, 110), the extremely high death rate was due more to diseases to which the Melanesians had little immunity. Conditions did improve during the 1890s and mortality rates declined significantly, especially with the Melanesians now employed on copra plantations where the work was less arduous and where they could grow their own food (Corris 1973, 73-4).

While most Melanesians returned to their home islands, a growing number stayed. Many had married Fijians which made it difficult to return to their home village. Some were reluctant to return to the restricted village life of the past. Others had little choice except to stay: they had no assurances of being returned to the precise place where they had been picked up (being returned to the wrong place could mean death), or what kind of reception awaited their return. Still others had no means of returning.

From the 1890s Melanesians who remained in Fiji gravitated towards Levuka and increasingly Suva on the island of Viti Levu, which in 1882 had replaced Levuka as the seat of government. In 1884 there were around 300 ex-plantation workers living around these towns, but by 1908 the numbers exceeded 2,700 (Report on Polynesian Immigration for 1884:7 and 1908:4, cited in Halapua 1996, 293). They provided a source of ready unskilled labour. Some found jobs as road builders, construction workers, stevedores, boat’s crew, domestic servants, store workers and gardeners. As their numbers increased, however, work became difficult to find. They lived with their kinsmen, mostly in makeshift dwellings on the outskirts of the towns, forgotten by the Colonial Government and left to fend for themselves. These human remnants of a bygone era fell into a state of poverty and neglect. Today they are perhaps the most marginalised and disadvantaged group in Fiji and most rely on subsistence living in squatter settlements. According to a 2003 Fiji Government report, they are the ‘worst affected’ minority ethnic group in Fiji (Nomae et al. 2004, 1).

Land Tenure

As well as problems of unemployment and government neglect, a fundamental difficulty for the Melanesians was, and remains, the issue of land tenure. Traditionally, land and people in Fiji are bound together in the vanua, a concept that is integral to identity and the Fijian way of life. In an effort to guarantee the rights of Fijians to their lands, the British colonial administration appropriated the Fijian concept of mataqali (sub-clan or lineage). Membership of a mataqali is inherited patrilineally and entitles certain privileges, including land rights (Halapua 1987, 44-5). Legislation ensured that some 83 per cent of the land remained in Fijian hands. At the same time it entrenched a state of landlessness for the Melanesians (as it has for Indo-Fijians and other non-indigenous Fijians) (Chaudhary 1987, 156-7, 160, 168). Although Melanesians are similar in appearance to indigenous Fijians and have adopted their language and customs as their own—and despite the fact that most are part Fijian through marriage—their landlessness sets them apart and consigns them permanently to a low status.

The question of land tenure in Fiji is a complex one that goes beyond the scope of this article. However, it is true to say that the vanua, or traditional customary ways, is increasingly under pressure from western materialism (Boydell and Shah 2003, 1), and that the Melanesians are victims in this process. Essentially, there are three categories of land in Fiji that were enshrined by the British administration: First, there is Crown Land; second, Native Land which is land held in common by the mataqali and can only be acquired by descent; third, Freehold Land which refers to land that was bought by foreigners prior to cession but now can be purchased by anyone at considerable cost.

Most Melanesians live on land that is held by the mataqali. Many of the original leases were based on verbal agreements in the late 1880s or early 1900s. This arrangement has left the Melanesians in a weak position regarding their legal rights. Problems for the Melanesian settlements became apparent with the expansion of urban development and a corresponding increase in
the value of land and leases. Upon expiration, a lease is often not renewed and the Melanesians are invoiced for rent they cannot afford, or the land is gradually whittled away through subdivision in the interests of commercial development (Halapua 2001, 91-110). A number of settlers has already been forced to relocate (several times in some cases), the latest casualty being those at Namara settlement in Tacirua East, Suva, where some families have lived for over a hundred years. These squatters have been given the option of buying plots of land in the settlement for around $AUD13,000, but this is not really an option for people living below the poverty line, unless they can secure financial assistance (Seke interview of Jo Sanegar, 2009). The only settlements with security of tenure for the Melanesians are those owned by the Anglican Church. Of the forty Melanesian settlements only four are on land owned or leased by the Church.

Role of Anglican Church

With the absence of assistance from the Colonial Government, the Anglican Church took up the cause of Melanesian poverty. Reverend William Floyd arrived in Levuka in 1870 to serve the pastoral needs of the Anglican settlers. His work was sanctioned by the Bishops of Melbourne and Sydney since many of the settlers had come from their respective Dioceses. When the Colony’s Chief Justice drew attention to the plight of the Melanesians it seemed natural for Floyd to include them in his mission (Halapua 2001, 45, 47). The Wesleyans and Roman Catholics also attempted to establish influence among the Melanesians and made some converts (Corris 1973, 93), but the Anglican Church and Floyd prevailed for the most part.

Floyd’s first major undertaking was to take out a lease on eleven acres of land to establish a settlement for the Melanesians, known as Wailailai (Halapua 2001, 45, 47). A small school was built to provide an education for Melanesian children who were barred from government schools. By the early 1960s overcrowding, poor sanitation and lack of water at Wailailai, as well as uncertainties surrounding the lease, led to the purchase by the Diocese of Polynesia of 460 acres of freehold land some nine miles from Levuka Town, known as Wainaloka. However, a new lifestyle based on farming required major readjustments and much of the land was unsuitable in any case. Some felt there had been a lack of dialogue in purchasing the property and chose to stay at Wailailai with the conveniences of living close to town, despite uncertainties about the lease’s renewal. (Tapu 1987, 30-33).

Similar missionary work occurred in Suva as the numbers of impoverished Melanesians increased on the fringes of the town. A school was established, and a hostel to provide accommodation for the students. A major project was the establishment in 1941 of a large settlement at Wailoku on land leased by the Church to centralize the numerous scattered Melanesian communities. The majority of Melanesians, however, preferred to remain with their kinship groups in the original settlements (Halapua 2001, 74-5).

Another attempt at centralising the Melanesians was the establishment in 1964 of a settlement at Naviavia, Vanua Levu, on a copra estate owned by the Anglican Church. The original idea was to relocate Melanesians throughout Vanua Levu, as well as in Levuka, to the new settlement. However, the Church met with some resistance, especially from older Melanesians at Levuka who did not want to be uprooted. (Halapua 2001, 90, fn.1). The Church provided funds for a primary school at the new settlement, but the considerable distance to Labasa on the other side of the island made further education difficult if not impossible. The remoteness of the settlement also made jobs especially difficult to find so that the villagers depended on subsistence farming, a situation that continues today.

Despite some drawbacks, the contribution of the Anglican Church to the Melanesians’ welfare has been considerable. On the other hand, their efforts have not paid off in terms of Melanesian self-development and independence. The Church establishment today concedes that its legacy is mixed (Bryce, 2008). Rather than addressing the root cause of Melanesian deprivation and hardship, the Church paternalistically took on the role of guardianship and unwittingly aggravated problems of social alienation, poverty and unemployment. Bringing people together from different clans and regional areas and putting them together into centralized settlements demonstrated little understanding of their needs. The adoption of the Fijian language and customs disconnected the immigrants from their roots, resulting in a loss of identity and purpose. Their marginalisation and disempowerment were reinforced by a lack of educational opportunities which severely inhibited their prospects for advancement in mainstream society. The first generation was almost entirely illiterate, while the Church schools provided only a limited educational environment for the second and subsequent generations (Halapua 2001, 63, 124).

These problems are still very real within the Melanesian settlements. According to a 2004 study of six settlements around Suva, about fifty per cent of the population has attended primary school only, forty per cent has acquired lower secondary school education, while only seven per cent had achieved higher secondary education (Nomae et al. 2004, 10-11). Few have the opportunity of a tertiary education. Multi-ethnic scholarships are difficult to attain.
As Melanesians compete with Indians, whose population far exceeds that of the Melanesians and who generally have a head start in educational standards (Abong, 2009). A growing, but still tiny, number of Melanesians hold a university degree which allows them to make career choices and integrate into the wider community. The Anglican Church continues to be involved in the welfare of the Melanesian settlements, mitigating problems of poverty and homelessness. For example, it has provided relief for flood victims and set up a fund to buy land when leases expire so that evicted Melanesians have somewhere to live (Lomaloma 2008). While its past efforts have not always addressed the deeper causes of poverty and despair, the Church is now encouraging Melanesians to take initiatives (Bryce 2008).

**Fiji Melanesian Community Development Association: A Search for Empowerment and Identity**

The Fiji Melanesian Community Development Association (FMCDA) represents a move away from the Anglican Church’s traditional top-down approach. It was formed in 1988 by Fiji Melanesians to promote and foster the best interests of their community, regardless of religious affiliation or regional origins. The community is well represented with two members from each settlement elected to serve on the Executive Council. The Anglican Vicar at each of the settlements leased by the Trustees of the Diocese of Polynesia is entitled to ex-officio membership. The Association stresses good communication and regular visits are made to the various scattered settlements. Significantly, it provides leadership and acts as a conduit between the Melanesian community and the Government. For example, it is currently negotiating with Government authorities for assistance for the Melanesians at the Namara settlement regarding their enforced relocation (Nunu 2009).

The FMCDA was created on a tide of national social and political upheaval that brought to the fore issues of race and identity. The 1987 defeat of the long-engrossed Alliance Party by the Fiji Labour Party/National Federation Party Coalition on a platform of social democratic change unleashed a storm of anger and resentment by reactionary forces that led to the formation of the militant Taukei Movement. Its leaders incited fears that indigenous Fijians would become powerless in their own country. The Indian population was the main target of racial slurs and violence, but minority communities also suffered threats of violence (Robie 1989, 230). As is well-known, the campaign of destabilisation led to Fiji’s first military coup one month after the election, staged by Lieutenant-Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka. Hopes for a real multiracial Fiji were completely dashed after Rabuka’s second military takeover and revocation of the 1970 constitution (Robie 1987, 213-217; Lal 2006, 49-50).

Amplifying Melanesian concerns was their transfer from the Fijian rolls to the General rolls under the new constitution. They had previously voted in elections as Fijians under Fiji’s unique racially-based political system. Now their Fijian status was removed and they were forced to join the ranks of other minorities (Europeans, part-Europeans, other Pacific Islanders, Chinese and Eurasians) (Fraenkel 1987, 26; Kuva, nd, 30). These events formed the background of the FMCDA’s formation and acted as a catalyst for urgent action.

The FMCDA’s objectives emphasise a spirit of respect and cooperation within the Melanesian community in recognition of the need for cohesion. Also considered important is the strengthening of a sense of identity within a multiracial society. Human needs scholars argue that the need for identity is deeply ingrained in human nature and that it provides the means of self-recognition and self-esteem. Group identity is equally important and, although it may limit individual identity, it also serves as a means of promoting that identity (Burton 1997, 36-7; Burton 1996, 30-31). An important means of establishing identity is telling stories that connect with family roots, customs and ancestral homelands, as well as reviving original cultures through music and theatre. Encouragement is given by the FMCDA in all these enterprises.

A top priority for the FMCDA is the need for a high standard of education for all Melanesians since it is regarded as providing the only means to escape the poverty trap. Those who have managed to finish high school and achieve tertiary training are testament to the possibilities that are opened. For this to become a reality for more Melanesians there needs to be outside funding which is unlikely to come from the Government, especially in the present critical economic environment. Raising funds is an important part of FMCDA’s agenda for educational, health and legal needs, as well as community maintenance and development. While assistance with basic needs and upkeep of the settlements is a central concern for the FMCDA, ultimately it would like to see the end of the settlements and the integration of the Melanesians into the broader community. This long-term goal presumes the self-empowerment of Melanesians and an equality of opportunity. This may seem unrealistic, but any incremental change in the process must be considered a step in the right direction. It may also appear to contradict the idea of group identity. However, group identity is a necessary first step to self-identity which evolves with time and circumstances. Inevitably Fijian-ness will become more pronounced, but this does not necessarily mean forgetting one’s heritage. Identity, after all, is forged in historical memory.
Conclusion
The history of the treatment of Melanesians in Fiji is a shameful one. They have been victims of structural violence from the beginning, imposed by the planters, the Colonial administration, the Anglican Church (though unwittingly), and an independent Fiji with its racially-based political and social system (itself a legacy of colonial racial thinking). All societies and institutions have degrees of structural violence, but the Melanesians have suffered unnecessarily through racial discrimination, social and economic marginalisation, substandard education, low salaries, lack of employment opportunities, health facilities and personal and economic development. They are little better off today than they were a century ago. Unlike their counterparts in Queensland, they have never received official recognition of their contribution to the plantation industry, or their hard labour in developing Fiji's basic infrastructure. While the outlook may be grim, there are some reasons for hope. First, the FMCDA has brought leadership and cohesion. It has helped alleviate some of the problems affecting basic human needs. It has raised funds for development and promoted an awareness of problems faced by the Melanesians. Importantly, it has access to Government representatives, although with a downward-spiraling economy the Government is not in a position currently to be of much financial assistance.  

Second, the Peoples’ Charter for Change, Peace and Progress—an initiative of President Josefa Iloilo and backed by self-appointed prime minister and military chief Frank Bainimarama—is committed to a non-racial, united and ‘truly democratic’ Fiji. The FMCDA supports the Charter since it promises to rectify some long-standing injustices. The incorporation of its principles and policies has not yet occurred. Also of concern is the milieu in which the changes are to take place in view of Bainimarama’s past and present undemocratic proclivities. Gandhi’s words are perhaps of relevance in this respect. He said: ‘There is no way to peace; Peace is the way.’ For the Fijians, especially the Fiji Melanesians, the substitution of the word ‘democracy’ in place of ‘peace’ in Gandhi’s adage would also be apt. A real democracy cannot exist without racial equality and non-discriminatory opportunities. Equally important is a democratic process in achieving these goals, but the electoral means cannot become viable until racial attitudes have changed.

Endnote
1. I thank Volker Boege, Lesley Bryant, Rupeni Oli and Ralph Summy for valuable comments on the draft. Thanks also to a number of people in Fiji for their time, hospitality, generosity and stories. However, views expressed and any errors are, of course, the responsibility of the author.
2. Previously known as the ‘Solomoni’, the descendants prefer the more inclusive name ‘Melanesian’.
3. Strictly speaking ‘blackbirding’ means the practice of kidnapping and transporting Pacific Islanders to provide cheap labour for colonial capitalist enterprises.
4. Canberra-based historians Dorothy Shineberg, Deryck Scarr and Peter Corris paved the way in the late 1960s and early 1970s for a ‘revisionist’ view that highlighted the active and willing participation of Pacific Islanders in the labour trade. Subsequently, historians have approached the subject from a variety of perspectives so that it is difficult to detect any particular trend (Moore 1992, 62-3).
5. Structural violence is violence that inheres in a society’s systems and institutions, such as exploitation of disadvantaged groups. Sometimes it is incorporated in the violence associated with culture, for example, racism and other kinds of discrimination.
6. The vast majority of recruits came from the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) during the early phase of the labour trade. In 1870, labour recruiters moved into the Solomon Islands and by the 1890s the Solomon Islands had replaced the New Hebrides as the main source of labour for Fiji (Corris 1973, 24, 43).
7. Ralph Schlomowitz estimates 26,460 contracts were entered into (1986, 109).
8. Permission not given to identify source.
9. Only 8 per cent of labourers who came during the period 1876-1911 were women (Siegel 1985, 47).
10. A group of Solomon Islands descendants has recently formed a separate organization called the Fiji Solomon Island Descendants Association whose aim is to concentrate solely on the needs of the Solomon Islands descendants.
11. The FMCDA might also need to contact outside sources for assistance, such as the Melanesian Spearhead Group or the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, whose government had expressed concern for Fiji’s growing problem of squatter settlements, has been appointed to head the UNDP.

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Amy, Ichabod

Art & Lit class filing out after another of Miz Marchaun’s solos, what the hell, a grade’s a grade, solo on keeping the imagination fertile, that despite scientific claims to the contrary that the moon does rise and night fall, that there are jewel-like constellations in the sky and ours is among them, one of the scholars muttering drivel like that wasn’t going to make poets out of us, another, Amelia or Ike, been so long Can’t remember which, chiming in, -O-o-h, lookit the wind –

PHILIP A. WATERHOUSE, SONOMA, CA

SAMANTHA ROSE AND CLIVE MOORE

Australia was once home to several of the world’s leading Pacific research centres or schools and Australian based scholars led the way in many fields. In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s this seemed a natural expansion of Australia’s role in a region that was decolonising. The last ten years have seen a worrying trend develop as Australia’s output of postgraduate degrees on the Pacific has declined and Pacific studies research has become marginalised or stagnant. This essay argues that Australia needs to expand the body of expertise it has on the Pacific and to revitalise higher degree research across the nation’s universities, museums, galleries, archives and libraries.

The Records of Historical Scholarship

Every year since 1966, the Journal of Pacific History (JPH) has published an annual bibliography of theses and publications in Pacific history and the social sciences generally. World-wide since 1964, it notes that 3,028 Masters and PhD theses were awarded. The JPH bibliography remains a unique indicator of the state of humanities and social science research in Pacific Studies over the last four decades. The bibliography is the most comprehensive list available and tells us a great deal about the state of the academic market for Pacific Studies in Australia, even though its primary emphasis is on history. While the list is close to complete for Australia and New Zealand and is an excellent source of English language theses, it is not a full list of theses on the Pacific in the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences produced in universities in Europe, Africa, the Americas or Asia. The JPH list covers history theses, as well as theses from archaeology, anthropology, geography, politics, education, linguistics, economics, literature, law, theology and a few from the sciences. Earlier catalogues exist, (Dickson and Desser 1970; Coppell 1978; Coppell and Stratigos 1983) as well as the more recent Pacific Islands Dissertations and Theses from the University of Hawai‘i, 1923–2008 by Lynette Furuhashi, and the Bibliographic Index of Pacific Theses in New Zealand Universities (2009) which includes all theses back to 1900, by Pollyanna Rasmussen-Paese. The British Library also has a new service called EThOS, a centralized archive of digitised theses from British institutions. The new Australasian Digital Theses Project will in future provide a comprehensive list and digital access to theses from Australia and New Zealand, although only from participating universities.

Graphing the Australian theses output against world output in Pacific History and related disciplines indicates that between 1964 and 2006 Australia produced around 456 Masters and PhD theses on the Pacific, about fifteen percent of the world total. The population of Australia in 1964 was approximately eleven million and to keep pace the output should have doubled in size by 2006, rather than remaining constant. However, this is also true for Pacific island-related theses output from North America and Europe, which have also failed to keep pace with population growth. In the statistics there is no sign of dramatic increases anywhere, and there was a universal downturn in Pacific theses production during the 1980s and 1990s.

The 1960s and 1970s were the years when the Pacific Islands were moving from colonialism to independence and academic interest in that process was high and Pacific Studies was in an expanding across the tertiary sector. During the 1980s and early 1990s, except for instability in Bougainville, Fiji and New Caledonia, the region was reasonably prosperous and developing according to internationally set standards, however, the rate of take-up and thesis completion declined. A decline in postgraduate output in the 1980s and 1990s probably reflects increasing concentration on Asia, and the diversification of disciplines, so that ‘history’ in now often incorporated into gender, media, film, peace and conflict or development studies, governance, anthropology or economic studies. In the late 1990s and early 21st century, phrases such as “Doomsday scenario”, “Falling off the map”, “Arc of Instability” and alleged sea level rises, along with deterioration in world stability through terrorism, possibly caused a renewed interest among postgraduates to take up a thesis on the Pacific. But there remains a core problem: Pacific History
postgraduate numbers have declined, particularly at the Australian National University (ANU), once the flagship of world research on the Pacific.

North America (including universities in Hawai`i and Guam) lead the field in Pacific-related theses output with a total of 1,554 theses or fifty-one percent. Hawai`i is by far the biggest producer within the American market (450 Pacific Studies doctoral and master’s theses in Pacific Studies, 1923–2008). Together with Guam, Hawai`i produced 129 theses or 4.2 percent of the total in the Journal of Pacific History statistics. Europe follows next at 497 theses, or 16.4 percent with a significant change occurring over the forty-three years as output on the Continent increased relative to Great Britain. Pacific-based universities also began to operate during these years: in Samoa, Tonga, Guam, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Indonesia’s Papua Provinces, the regional University of the South Pacific (USP) with its central campus located in Suva, Fiji, and six in Papua New Guinea. In the 1960s and 1970s, theses from UPNG and USP were mainly by resident expatriates, but more recently there has been a stream of indigenous-authored theses from these universities. Earlier, indigenous Pacific academics were mostly trained overseas and their theses were credited within foreign university totals.

The most telling statistics rates Australian theses output against those from New Zealand. It makes the declining output of Pacific postgraduate research in Australia abundantly clear. Considering the huge population difference, Australian output (456 theses) only slightly outnumbers those from New Zealand (443). New Zealand has produced more Masters than PhD theses. However, given the reduction in the lengths of PhDs in the last decade, (from over 100,000 down to 85,000 words) many of the earlier Masters theses in New Zealand were often the equivalent in size of a modern PhD. In New Zealand, Pacific Studies has always tended to concentrate on Polynesia. It is also clear that over the last ten-years New Zealand has shot ahead of Australia at an amazing rate and shows every sign of eclipsing Pacific Studies theses production in Australian universities. If thesis data included Maori Studies as ‘Pacific Islands’ research then New Zealand would be far ahead of Australia in output.

The two individual universities which produce the most theses on the Pacific are the University of Hawai`i (411 theses) and ANU (287 theses). The University of Hawai`i tended to concentrate on the remaining and former American territories in Micronesia, but has also covered a wide range of research in Polynesia and Melanesia; it has provided a more complete coverage of the Pacific Islands than any other tertiary institution. At ANU, the Research School of Pacific Studies was one of the four foundation research schools established; a few staff arrived during the late 1940s but the School did not function fully until the early 1950s. The first PhD student in Pacific history began his studies in 1953. The School emerged out of awareness that Australia needed a good understanding of the problems of our Pacific neighbours, and of Asia, to our near north. While it has diversified, ANU postgraduate studies always had a strong and abiding connection to research on PNG. The modern Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies is still relatively large—with more than a 100 academic staff in 2009, but the Asian component is larger than the Pacific section.

Within Australia, eighteen universities have produced Pacific Islands History or Pacific Islands Studies theses. Aside from ANU, most of the theses come from Sydney: the University of Sydney, Macquarie University and the UNSW have produced seventy-one. The University of Queensland rates well with thirty-two theses. The output of smaller universities rises and falls depending on the presence of staff with Pacific interests, the provision of undergraduate Pacific units/subjects, and the public interest at various times in specific issues and Pacific topics. The University of New England has shown a surprising continuity over many years along with La Trobe University, which flourished as a Pacific centre briefly in the 1970s and early 1980s. The University of Adelaide and Flinders University also had a brief florescence in the 1970s and 1980s, when they had staff with Pacific expertise. There are no theses recorded for the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Tasmania.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Australian University</th>
<th>Pacific History/Pacific Studies Theses, 1964–2007</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian National University</td>
<td>1964–2007</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deakin University</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith Cowan University</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flinders University</td>
<td>1979–1990</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffith University</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Cook University</td>
<td>1981–2005</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Trobe University</td>
<td>1972–2002</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macquarie University</td>
<td>1970–1990</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murdoch University</td>
<td>1973–1998</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland University of Technology</td>
<td>2005–2006</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Adelaide</td>
<td>1977–1995</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Melbourne</td>
<td>1965–2004</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of New England</td>
<td>1975–1998</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of New South Wales</td>
<td>1970–2005</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Newcastle</td>
<td>1973–2004</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Queensland</td>
<td>1970–2005</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Sydney</td>
<td>1965–2005</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Wollongong</td>
<td>1985–2006</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>456</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Australian University Output on Pacific History and Related Disciplines 1964–2006
(Source: JPH Annual Bibliography 1966-2006)

Current academic trends are not likely to attract more postgraduate scholars into Pacific Studies. The key research issues and those likely to receive Australian Research Council (ARC) and APA (Australian Postgraduate Awards) approval are increasingly ‘big ticket’ items: urban problems, global tensions and conflicts, Islam and other global religions, terrorism, modernity, globalisation, and environmental and health issues. The Pacific Islands region is at the margins of all these trends, both as a region and as a field of study, and Pacific Islanders no longer express a preference to come to Australia for higher degree study. The figures show clearly the dominance of ANU in research on Papua New Guinea, particularly in geography and anthropology, with ANU producing nearly 50 percent of the total output from all Australian universities. The figures in other disciplines, while low, reveal that much Pacific Islands research remains outside the ‘Pacific Studies’ category because of being undertaken in faculties outside the arts, humanities and social sciences—in the QUT case, more than half the theses on PNG came from the Education Faculty and at La Trobe one-third of theses on PNG came from the sciences. Anthropology dominates Australian research on Papua New Guinea, but education, geography, sciences and humanities all have significant output, each producing 10 percent of all theses.

Australian National University Theses (Masters and PhD) on Papua New Guinea: 1949-2002
(Source: Australasian Digital Theses Database)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year(s)</th>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>No. of Theses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949-1982</td>
<td>Humanities (68% in Anthropology)</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983-1985</td>
<td>Geology</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986-1987</td>
<td>Botany</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988-1989</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1991</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1995</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>Archaeology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>Linguistics</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The knowledge market has become increasingly global and Australia should produce its own knowledge and also tap into that produced elsewhere. But, Australia has responsibilities as a middle-order power in the world and as a giant in the Pacific region and to nurture a flow through to the postgraduate level, Australia must incorporate the study of the Pacific Islands into university undergraduate programs and in the school curriculum. These arguments have been presented in a national strategy report in 2009 prepared by the Australian Association for the Advancement of Pacific Studies (AAAPS).

The present Australian government is spending quite liberally to promote Asian Studies in Australia – recent announcements include $18m for scholarships to bring Asian students to Australia, $58m for a South Asia research centre, and $64m to promote Asian languages and cultures in schools. Spending on teaching and research on the Pacific – nil!

The government’s response to the AAAPS national report was to argue that universities were already well funded and should sort out the priorities themselves. Even more worrying was the official response that Australia already gives plenty of aid to the Pacific as development assistance and that there was no need to specifically target expansion in Pacific teaching and research. A query to the Education Minister about creating a new Centre of Excellence in Pacific Studies teaching and research was then forwarded to Foreign Affairs as it was said to be covered by that portfolio. The late 2009 report of the Senate Inquiry into relations with the Pacific argued that developing a close relationship through a Memorandum of Understanding between Canberra’s bureaucrats and ANU was a desirable course of action. Is it, but benefits that would flow nationally across the whole Pacific research sector were not identified.

So the problem remains unresolved. What is quite clear, using New Zealand as a benchmark, is that Australia needs to produce about five times as many postgraduate Pacific experts with Graduate Diploma, MA and PhD theses and fieldwork experience in the region, as it does at present if it is going to maintain its international reputation, and geographic and historical place in the world and in the Pacific.

There is a budgetary and management logic to this argument as well, because the decline in postgraduates with Pacific backgrounds means Australia does not have the necessary critical mass of expertise to administer its development assistance dollars to the best advantage, nor maintain its commercial, humanitarian and diplomatic relationships with the region. The cost will be relatively small compared with the benefits to the national interest.
Nor are we equipped as citizens to be good neighbours into the future, with the “deep understanding” of the needs and cultures of our Pacific neighbours which Prime Minister Rudd has identified. Nor are we as a nation able to incorporate Australians of Pacific Islander descent into this endeavour. The time to focus postgraduate research on issues that affect Australia as a nation in the Pacific is now.

The trends and long-term patterns discussed above suggest that the most impact would be achieved by creating a higher profile in terms of scholarships to attract emerging scholars to research on the Pacific Islands, or on Pacific Islanders in Australia. Certainly there is an urgent need to expand undergraduate provision of units/subjects on the Pacific Islands, as without undergraduate study there will be little flow-on into postgraduate study. The downward trend or stalled progress in postgraduate theses completions and in research outputs (the annual tally of DEST points) could be reversed by the establishment of over-arching councils, more centres of excellence and inter-university linkages. The evidence suggests that immediate funding increases in scholarships, research centres and linkage projects across the research sector would have an impact.

Universities in all states and territories need to develop greater capacity for research on the Pacific Islands, but this can only be accomplished with government backing, or corporate sponsorship, and that means through specific and targeted ARC and APA encouragement. For instance, Asia has been an ARC “strategic” category, but not the Pacific, which is overdue for inclusion as a “strategic” category.Universities in all states and territories need to develop greater capacity for research on the Pacific Islands, but this can only be accomplished with government backing, or corporate sponsorship, and that means through specific and targeted ARC and APA encouragement. For instance, Asia has been an ARC “strategic” category, but not the Pacific, which is overdue for inclusion as a “strategic” category.

In March 2009, The Australia-Korea Foundation, a DFAT-funded council to improve bi-lateral relations with the Republic of Korea, called for applications for its new round of grants. Grants were offered to support ‘research, professional development, language and cultural studies’ or ‘increased public awareness’ and the ‘development of partnerships’. Pacific Studies teaching and research in universities, museums, galleries, libraries and archives needs a similar government scheme of support, not only to enhance existing research on the Pacific Islands, and awareness of and partnerships with the Pacific Islands, but also to urgently expand the level of engagement by Australian researchers with matters of national interest, common concern and regional development.

References
Coppell W.G. and Stratigos, S. 1983. A Bibliography of Pacific Island Theses and Dissertations. Canberra: Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University in conjunction with the Institute for Polynesian Studies, Brigham Young University-Hawaii Campus.

Authors
Samantha Rose is a BAHons graduate and now postgraduate student at Queensland University of Technology. Her honours thesis was on Kanak literature in New Caledonia and her doctoral thesis is on the development of women’s groups in Kiribati. She was co-author, with Clive Moore and Max Quanchi, of a national report on teaching and research on the Pacific in Australia, co-convenor of the inaugural AAAPS conference in 2006, and has carried out fieldwork and presented papers at conferences in Australia and the Pacific Islands.

Clive Moore is Professor of Australian and Pacific History at the University of Queensland, and Head of the School of History, Classics, Religion and Philosophy. He is President of the Australian Association for the Advancement of Pacific Studies, and co-author of a national report, with Samantha Rose and Max Quanchi, on teaching and research on the Pacific in Australia.
Policy options in the climate change debate are normally treated as an issue of rational policy making. Current policy debate is typically restricted to the respective merits of a carbon tax or emissions trading scheme (ETS) (e.g. Gittins 2007; Humphreys 2007; Denniss 2009). Regulatory standards rarely feature on the public agenda, and if they do, are often dismissed as an outdated command and control approach (Beder 2006, 9).

Stationary energy, primarily from power stations, is the largest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Australia (DCC 2009, 5). Governments have significant responsibility for reducing emissions in this sector because they set the policy parameters and make decisions on long-lived energy infrastructure. An ETS is the main mechanism in the Kyoto Protocol for tackling climate change, and has been chosen by the Rudd government as the centrepiece of its climate change strategy.

Yet, it seems there are hidden reasons why governments and corporations have endorsed an ETS as the key response to climate change. I highlight how an ETS allows government and industry to create an illusion of action while simultaneously obscuring how business-as-usual for the major polluters is being entrenched through concessions whose full implications are either hidden or poorly understood. I also show that even if an ETS were implemented properly, it is ill-suited to achieve significant emissions reductions from the stationary energy sector because its primary focus is economic efficiency. By contrast, emissions standards regulation can be designed to accomplish substantial and rapid reductions with far greater certainty. Finally, I analyse an ETS and emissions standards in terms of their effects on the development of a climate change social movement. I find that an ETS with its tedious technicalities and its legitimisation of pollution undermines public activism, whereas regulation has the potential to enhance social activism by harnessing moral suasion and aligning with movement goals such as phasing out coal.

Economic Instruments

Economic instruments such as a carbon tax or ETS have been promoted by corporate-funded think tanks as market-based solutions to environmental problems (Beder 2001, 1). They are based on the concept of ‘market failure’ – the idea that environmental problems only arise because the market does not value the environment and fails to include ‘external’ factors such as pollution in the price mechanism (Beder 2006, 125). The remedy rests on an ideological assumption that environmental damage can be compensated or paid for if the market prices pollution or assigns property rights to environmental values such as the atmosphere or waterways (Beder 2006, 192-93).

A carbon tax is a price-based measure levied on the carbon content of fossil fuels. It aims to reduce the quantity of pollution by raising the price of polluting activities. An ETS is a rights-based measure that establishes a market for pollution by distributing tradeable pollution rights to eligible firms within an institutional and regulatory framework (Beder 2006, 157). An ETS is supposed to limit emissions by restricting the number of pollution permits to a predetermined amount. In theory, it has the advantage of establishing maximum permissible levels of carbon...
pollution. If controlling the quantity of emissions is the most important criteria, then an ETS would appear to be the better choice.

However, an ETS provides corporations with relatively inconspicuous leverage points to exploit for their own advantage. Governments are subject to enormous industry pressure, particularly from the economically powerful fossil fuel and resource sector (Hamilton 2007, 16). For an ETS to function effectively and to provide an incentive to reduce pollution, pollution permits should be allocated by auction (Garnaut 2008, 331-32). However, one of the easiest ways for governments to persuade industry to accept some form of policy action on climate change is to offer free permit allocation to the major polluters as an inducement to reduce vocal objections to an ETS. Free permit allocation undermines the economic and environmental integrity of an ETS (Garnaut 2008, 314-15, 343). It involves a huge transfer of wealth from the public to the worst polluters and inverts the polluter pays principle because it takes public money to pay the polluter (Gittins 2007).

European experience with free permit allocation shows that major polluters still pass on their permit price in the form of higher prices to the consumer (Lohmann 2006, 91; Macgill and Betz 2008, 1). The consumer therefore ends up paying twice for the pollution, and the government delivers massive windfall profits to big corporations. Rewarding the worst performers and punishing cleaner alternatives distorts the market by entrenching the position of the worst polluters and discriminating against the cleaner energy suppliers. This undermines any incentive to reduce pollution and invest in cleaner alternatives (Macgill and Betz 2008, 2).

Proponents argue that carbon trading increases the efficiency of an ETS by delivering the cheapest options for carbon abatement. However, carbon trading itself has significant drawbacks and risks. The value of international carbon credits is suspect, with many offset mechanisms in developing countries based on dubious emission reduction schemes that have harmful environmental and social outcomes (Bachram 2004, 4-9; Beder 2006, 180-82, 188-89; Lohman 2006, 219-309). Furthermore, large scale carbon derivatives trading including speculative secondary markets trading in poorly verified carbon offsets, or subprime carbon, could ruin the environmental and financial integrity of the global carbon market (Chan 2009, 2-4).

Carbon trading also highlights a key limitation of a market scheme – it does not necessarily restrict pollution. Instead, it offers polluters a choice to reduce emissions, or continue polluting the environment and cover their emissions by purchasing credits. Trading may therefore discourage innovation and perpetuate bad practice rather than reduce or eliminate emissions (Beder 2006, 196-97). Moreover, by legitimising pollution as an entitlement, trading undermines the ability of citizens to generate outrage against environmental damage caused by corporations (Beder 2006, 218-19). An ETS favours industry because it allows corporations to proceed with business-as-usual and removes the stigma from their activities.

The Rudd government (DCC 2008, 11-9) has decided to take full advantage of offsets by allowing the unlimited purchase of international carbon credits. Guy Pearse (2009, 65-6) has warned that Australia could be awash in cheap carbon offsets from avoided deforestation in PNG and Indonesia. This has serious implications for Australia’s domestic emissions. Stationary energy such as coal-fired power stations accounts for half of Australia’s total emissions. Emissions from this sector rose a huge 49.5 per cent between 1990 and 2007 (DCC 2009, 4-5). Unlimited access to offsets means Australia can continue its current trajectory of rapidly increasing energy emissions and still qualify for its reduction target by buying international carbon credits. Contrary to claims about controlling the quantity of emissions, this suggests that an ETS is a convenient mechanism for avoiding emissions reductions.

Free permit allocation and compensation to the worst polluters allied with unlimited access to cheap international carbon credits indicates the Rudd government has no intention of enacting policy that will restrain Australia’s emissions growth by impacting on the major polluters. However, this is not readily apparent to the wider public because government rhetoric has promoted the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) as the first scheme to ever limit carbon emissions from industry (Rudd 2008). The opaque nature of an ETS is therefore of enormous help in hiding inconvenient truths about policy inaction from the public. For governments that do not want to antagonise vested industry interests by forcing structural change, an ETS that conceals its ineffectiveness behind a veil of complexity allows government and industry to proceed with business as usual whilst deceiving the public that they are committed to action. This is a great danger of any official scheme, but particularly an ETS – it diminishes public agitation by covering up the reality and conveying a false impression that the problem is being tackled.

Some climate advocates, for example James Hansen (2009, 4), use the shortcomings of an ETS to argue the advantages of a carbon tax, in particular its
alleged simplicity and transparency. However, Clive Hamilton (2009, 4-5) points out that a carbon tax may be equally susceptible to interference from major polluting corporations seeking to gain exemptions that would destroy its effectiveness. Furthermore, gaining international agreement on relative rates of carbon tax between countries could be as difficult and protracted as securing agreement around an ETS (Hamilton 2009, 4-5). Finally, like an ETS, a carbon tax will not automatically lead to the mass production and consumption of low polluting technologies because government intervention and investment is often required to overcome market barriers (Beder 2008).

Even if it were possible to overcome the political obstacles to the effective implementation of an ETS or a carbon tax, market measures suffer a crucial limitation. Economic instruments encourage incremental changes to achieve an optimal level of pollution at least-cost (Beder 2006, 192-93). But the scientific evidence (IPCC 2007, 67; CCC 2009, 18-19) indicates that even reductions in global GHG emissions of 85 per cent by 2050 still carry significant climate risks.

Climate scientist James Hansen (2008b, 10; 2009, 2) has argued that humanity must phase out the use of coal globally by 2030 to have any chance of averting dangerous climate change. An ETS is completely unsuitable as a mechanism to drive rapid technological change of this magnitude involving the almost complete decarbonisation of energy supply. Furthermore, as other wealthy developed countries such as the United Kingdom follow Australia’s lead and allow offsets to count as domestic emissions reductions, a global emissions reduction target of 50 per cent by 2050 becomes an impossible charade (Monbiot 2009).

This presents a dilemma. Many environmentalists such as Hamilton (2009, 4-5) argue that it has taken two decades to establish an ETS as the agreed mechanism for emissions reductions under the Kyoto Protocol and there is no time to negotiate global agreement on a different mechanism. Yet, persisting with an ETS may lock in a mechanism incapable of delivering the necessary emissions reductions in the required timeframe. Fortunately, there is a range of other policy options, including regulation, available to governments.

**Regulation**

Regulation can be used to impose an emissions performance standard (EPS) on power stations to limit CO2 emissions. Current Australian emissions typically range from 0.4 tonne CO2/MWh for gas, 0.8-1.0 tonne CO2/MWh from black coal, and up to 1.5 tonnes CO2/MWh from brown coal (Diesendorf 2007, 217). The California government (2006) limited long-term investment in power generation to plants that emit less than 0.5 tonne CO2/MW. However, the government did not need to confront vested coal interests to introduce this legislation because California has no large coal-fired power plants, and the 20 per cent of electricity used in California that is generated by coal comes from interstate (see Milford et al. 2005, 1).

Diesendorf (2007, 311) suggests a similar policy could be applied in Australia. Standards for new power stations could be set at 0.5 tonne CO2/MWh, reduced to 0.1 tonne in 2020. Phased reductions could be implemented for existing stations beginning at 0.7 tonnes in 2012 and reaching 0.5 tonnes CO2/MWh by 2022. Gas, the lowest emission fossil fuel, is likely to be a critical interim technology over coming decades until renewable energy technologies are mainstreamed. An EPS would ensure that new power stations are either zero-emissions renewable energy or low emissions gas-fired combined-cycle or cogeneration plants (Diesendorf 2007, 311). An EPS also avoids a potentially perverse and unintended outcome of a renewable energy target (RET). Under an RET, it is possible that mandated increases in renewable energy could squeeze more expensive gas-fired power out of the market, and yet have no impact in reducing the share of dirty coal-fired power in the overall electricity market (Garnaut 2008, 356). An EPS provides the greatest certainty for reducing carbon emissions from existing power generation and for preventing the development of new emissions intensive electricity.

However, regulation as a tool to reduce energy emissions faces major obstacles. Environmental regulation has been strenuously opposed by industry, sections of the media and corporate-funded think-tanks and front groups (Beder 2006, 9). Unlike an ETS that merely adds to the cost of doing business, an EPS aims to phase out coal-fired power stations. As such, regulation would be subject to far more intense opposition from industry interests than an ETS. This raises the stakes for industry, government and the climate movement even higher and would crystallise debate around coal and policy action. Regulation will not occur without building overwhelming and sustained community pressure. Nevertheless, there may be ways in which a climate movement could gain momentum by lending weight to demands for regulation.

A moratorium on the commissioning of any new coal-fired station that does not incorporate carbon capture and storage (CCS) in its start-up operation has already
been promoted by Hansen. He identifies coal as the key culprit in climate change and has argued in scientific papers (Hansen et al. 2008, 229), in letters to heads of State (2008a), and in testimony in court (2008b, 11), that the coal industry must be scaled back and that the world cannot afford to burn coal beyond 2030. A moratorium is the centre-piece of a major grass-roots campaign in the United States organised by the Sierra Club (2009) that has prevented the construction of over one hundred new coal-fired power stations since 2001. A grassroots campaign for a moratorium could align with a push for enforced emissions standards on existing power stations. Regulation is easily understood and can be conveyed to the public within existing messages about a moratorium on new coal. A moratorium is unequivocal about future intentions. Emission standards combined with a moratorium could constitute a planned phase-out of coal-fired power generation.

Furthermore, regulation aligns with key climate movement frames. The climate movement has stigmatised coal as dirty and polluting. Regulation places responsibility for complying with emissions standards squarely on the emitter, in this case, coal-fired power stations. Breaches of regulatory standards are treated as an offence, allowing activists to raise the profile of the overall campaign and increase moral outrage over climate change by directly targeting specific violations as a criminal offence.

Conclusion
An ETS fails on several levels. Firstly, national governments are incapable of imposing costs on industry with a mechanism that allows them such an easy escape route, particularly one that is not immediately obvious to the general public. Secondly, even if effective implementation were possible, an ETS is the wrong tool for achieving substantial GHG reductions in a limited timeframe because its focus is economic efficiency and an optimal level of pollution rather than the elimination of emissions. Thirdly, an ETS disempowers citizens because it is impenetrable, technical, tedious, time-consuming and poorly understood. Fourthly, an ETS legitimises pollution in terms of a sanctioned right to pollute. Activists therefore risk losing one of their strongest tools because moral suasion is dissipated when continued environmental damage is deemed to be legal. Finally, citizens are disenfranchised because debate about domestic emissions is removed from the political arena and is instead determined by wealthy corporate interests in the market. An ETS will not deliver effective change in the near future, and it would be unwise to lock in policies such as the CPRS that will entrench polluter interests, exacerbate climate change and undermine public activism by giving the impression that the problem is being dealt with.

By contrast, even though regulation is not on the public or formal agenda at present, it may be better to campaign for proposals that stand a chance of doing the job even if it will take the development of a fully fledged social movement to provide the impetus for effective policy implementation and enforcement. Regulation has distinct advantages over an ETS, both as a policy tool and as a means of building public participation in the debate. Firstly, as a policy instrument, it is possible to design, implement and enforce regulation that forces measurable and fundamental change within a stipulated timeframe. Secondly, it places the blame for environmental damage on the polluter, provides a simple measure to assess compliance, and treats any breach as a criminal offence. This increases the opportunities for public participation in the debate and helps activists leverage outrage against major polluters. Finally, a campaign that included emissions standards for power stations could empower the climate movement because it aligns with key movement goals such as the phasing out of coal.

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Author

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Ross in the Midlands, Tasmania

Three black cockatoos of Ross in broad-arrow formation
Glide through mist over the remains of the female prison
And the burial ground of green mud along the river flats

In their yellow masks they are hunters of small life
Over the cream fields and autumn-scratched gully
They scream to, they are ghosts of infant convicts slain

The twisted pines on the hill that holds up the church
Rock with heartbreak so old it has steeped into their sinews
And they can't stop their lament no more than the rain

There is no beginning or end to the historic walk around the hill
The picket gate behind the church swings both ways in the swirl
Can never close on the spirits of the girls in labour

They have soaked into the sandstone walls
And stolen the hearts of the saints
From the blood-stained windows

No prayer but the pagan wind on the hilltop
The black birds with yellow tails wheel over the river
Calling the cries of the lost babies buried without names

John Synott,
Coochin, QLD
EXHIBITION REVIEW

A Review of ‘Talking Tapa’ – A Travelling Exhibition of Cultural Stories

HANNAH PERKINS

This article reviews the meanings of selection, presentation and narrative in a travelling exhibition of tapa cloth from various island groups throughout the Pacific. Talking Tapa is not an anthropological exhibition of historical curios, tribal art, or artefacts, and nor is it a display of visual art in a European sense. The meaning of tapa lies in processes, not solely in the object itself. The processes of manufacture, exchange, and collection are translated and recounted in the exhibition didactics, drawing on historical material as well as personal narratives.

Introduction

‘Talking Tapa: Pasifika Bark Cloth in Queensland’ is a travelling exhibition of tapa cloth from various island groups throughout the Pacific, displaying a complex mixture of histories and cultures through traditional and non-traditional bark cloth artworks. The launch, held at the University of Southern Queensland library, Springfield, ran from February 12 to March 20, 2009 and will continue travelling through regional Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria until November 2010. Curated by Joan G. Winter, the exhibition draws together stories of production, exchange and identity, told through a large and diverse collection of tapa from across the Pacific.

Interestingly, the concept of ‘talking tapa’ suggests that the cloth on exhibition speaks of its own origins, of its exchange between many hands, and of its journey to the muted walls of the USQ library. The tapa cloth would then continue to travel as part of the exhibition, telling further tales and gathering new meanings. However, the cloth itself can only tell a limited aspect of its own rich history, and then only to those visitors who understand the language of tapa design. This history, really the history of indigenous Pacific cultural practice and cross-cultural exchange, is narrated in the many labels and text panels, written by Winter and various contributors in both English and in the language of the tapa’s homeland. It can be argued that the discursive structure of Talking Tapa privileges histories that create a sense of regional community through the exploration of indigenous Pacific traditions, cultural practice, and exchange in the object labels. This review focuses on the written elements of the exhibit and their effectiveness in communicating exhibition themes and histories to audiences.

Exhibition themes and narratives are affected by institutional factors of production; by funding bodies and curatorial process. Unlike the other case studies, Talking Tapa was produced by a small community organisation, the Brisbane Multicultural Arts Centre (BEMAC), with a small budget, comparatively, to promote multiculturalism in Queensland through art-based initiatives. Winter defines this community in the introduction to the exhibition catalogue:

Talking Tapa is a meeting ground between Queenslanders of different cultural backgrounds and cultural viewpoints, drawn together because of their appreciation of tapa and the lifestyle and values it represents (Winter 2009, 8).

The exhibition addresses itself to a multicultural community, and creates a sub-community within that around the exhibition objects. Talking Tapa is funded by organisations that share, and perhaps shaped, its discourse on the role of art in communicating ideas of community and multiculturalism. Talking Tapa comprises contributions from Queensland and Pacific communities, both indigenous and non-indigenous, and the written exhibition text reflected this diversity of approach.

There are eleven national locations for the travelling exhibition, but the focus for this particular review will be the first exhibition at the University of Southern Queensland library, as it was the launch of the tour and the first opportunity to see the work in Brisbane. This was not a designated exhibition space but a functioning library chosen, perhaps, because it was located in an area close to large Pacific Islander populations on the south side of Brisbane and accessible to visiting indigenous and Queensland-based Pacific audiences. However, while local communities did not have to travel far to visit Talking Tapa, the library was a place of academic research and limited community access. University libraries are open to the public, but being on campus and aimed primarily at students and teachers, with limited borrowing privileges, a university library is less of a public, communal space than a council owned library for instance. It should be noted that the remainder
of the exhibitions were to be held in designated gallery spaces, which would dramatically change the way in which the objects and labels could be positioned and read. For instance, objects at the Museum of Brisbane exhibition in July were sparsely grouped by nation, or region, and the gallery was equipped with controlled lighting, climatic conditions, and some audio elements, such as the sound of breaking waves accompanying the installation of Savali Harvey’s father’s funeral nzatu. The USQ library could not incorporate these display elements. However, the same labelling content is used for each of the exhibitions, and therefore the exhibition narrative and object histories remain relevant for all Talking Tapa venues.

The Displays
The displays were not able to be separated into themed categories or ‘chunks’ of information that would help audiences assimilate information, as in later Talking Tapa displays, which divided content by region into 8 sub-categories (Hooper-Greenhill 1994, 133). This was problematic in the case of three strips of decorative tapa – two being women’s ceremonial skirts from Papua New Guinea with similar patterning, borders and colouring. The other strip of tapa, while similar in shape and grouped on the same wall with the skirts, was not a skirt but a totemangi (beaten bark) dance mask, or ritual banner from East New Britain – a different province, with a different language and different use of the material. Without reading the labelling information, one would take from the object placement that these objects were closely related, when in fact, beyond object size and the regional grouping of islands known as ‘Melanesia’, these objects have vastly different histories and little to do with one another. Design and spatial construction can alter the visual, and consequently historical, narrative of an exhibition. The labelling information was even more important when, as was the case here, architecture and location confused the display.

Label positioning and visibility was problematic. There was little consistency in the placement of labels near objects – they could be above, below, left, right, on top of and even around the corner from the tapa they spoke about, which made the entire exhibition difficult to read. This isn’t to say they were not placed as logically as was possible within the space, which obstructed clear object viewing and placement in many instances. The first thing visitors would see before entering the space was the display of a Fijian wedding set (I sulu ni vakamau) in the front window, before which someone saw fit to place a sofa setting, thereby obscuring half the objects and all of the labelling information. This information was repeated inside, in labels positioned on the wall near the back of the display. A missionary dress from Sigave District, Futuna Island, was put next to the water cooler, its label obscured around the corner and several tapas were placed behind desks, requiring visitors to squeeze past students at work to read the lengthy labels. This would foster a feeling of discomfort and a disinclination to read for any length of time. Awkward label placement complicated the exhibition experience and ultimately detracted from the ‘talking’ elements of the tapa, namely the written text.

There was a discourse of regional uniqueness operating in the labelling text, where methods of production and design were compared across regions in the Pacific, and within particular countries. This encouraged the viewer to note cultural distinctions and differences. For instance, for a Samoan tapa (siapo), the didactic text read, ‘Bark cloth in Samoa never held the same significance as it does in Fiji and Tonga,’ and went on to explain the early arrival of missionaries with European clothes as another reason for the ‘decline in bark cloth production’. In another example, the beaten bark cloth practices of the Caukadrove region of Fiji are distinguished from the rest of Fiji because of the region’s historical ties with Tongans in the 19th century. The label read; ‘Unlike [in] most other parts of Fiji the striking black and white patterns on this tapa (masi) of the Caukadrove area are hand painted’. History was reflected in the tapa design, and the label translated these differences of approach and provided important cultural context for objects which, while made of similar materials, served different purposes for different Indigenous groups, and these changed with patterns of migration and exchange.

Talking Tapa was an exploration not only of indigenous cultural practice, but of exchange between Australian and indigenous people, stressing the relevance of Pacific culture in the discussion of Queensland’s one hundred and fifty year history. A label for some bark cloth from Vanuatu, while also discussing design and techniques, mentioned Captain Mercer-Smith, a labour regulator in the late nineteenth century. Mercer functioned as a narrative linking device between Queensland and the Pacific. The history of indentured labour is a shared history, and a way that people, and tapa, crossed the ocean. Another label, this time for an object drawn from the Queensland Museum collection, discussed William MacGregor, former Lieutenant Governor of British New Guinea and founder of Queensland Museum. MacGregor, a relatively well-known historical figure, connected the history of the Museum’s collection practices with the Pacific and repatriation processes today. There were also more recent histories on display, discussing contemporary academics and collectors who had been involved with the exhibition somehow, as donators or contributors. These were not written in first person, however, and even the curator, Joan Winter, was discussed in third person. These individual histories contextualised the objects.
specifically, but from an Australian frame of reference, not an Indigenous one. These were positive accounts of historical and contemporary encounters in the Pacific from an Australian perspective. There is a nostalgic, almost wistful tone in one label which positioned the Pacific, for a moment, in the memories of those that have visited – in a European construction of Papua New Guinea.

**Explaining the Text**

The explanatory text in *Talking Tapa* contained multiple and varied communicative genres and approaches, or categories, including description, account (of techniques and social history), explanation and interpretation, aesthetic judgement, and assessment of emotional, historical and social impact. These categories in relation to exhibit text were used by White to create a functional linguistics approach (White 1996, 15-17). The label for *Kulit Kayu*—Sago Design contains several of these communicative approaches. First it gave an interpretation of the symbolic imagery in the work, and in doing so provided a detailed account of the social uses and significance of sago in Papuan culture. For instance ‘It is traditional in West Papuan culture for a sago tree planted by the father to be harvested by the son’, and then the label explained how the sago is eaten. In a further two paragraphs, the label narrated the history of the artist’s, Agus Onge’s, practice. These elements were disjointed and lacking in hierarchical structure, but provided multiple perspectives in which to view the work.

Many labels were accounts of the techniques used to produce tapa cloth in a certain country or region, particularly design elements and colours on the cloth, with a good use of endophoric references to physical elements that the viewer can see before them, for instance the colour or shape of the object. This encourages engagement and close viewing. Aesthetic judgement featured fairly regularly in the labelling content, where factual descriptive information was mixed with value judgements. A label for New Caledonian hardwood tapa beaters contained subjective comments on tapa beaters being ‘an artwork in themselves’, encouraging the viewer to interpret the object for its aesthetics as well as function. One tapa was called a ‘delightful example’. The adjective evokes an emotional response in the viewer, of delight and praise. In a final example, a Futuna Island design tradition that has not been historically located or explained was referred to by Winter as remaining ‘a beautiful mystery’. Again, this evokes emotional responses in the viewer, encouraging curiosity and wonder. Fascination with the unknown is privileged over historical accuracy. Additionally, there were no questions in the labels to encourage visitors to form their own opinion of the objects and their histories, or query the label statements. Objects came to represent not only their own particular history, but the history of indigenous traditions, cultural exchange, collection practices, migration and more. While confusing in terms of discursive unity between labels, this approach gave a range of diverse viewpoints of Pacific indigenous culture from an Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspective.

Together, the *Talking Tapa* labels formed a large body of text which, although inconsistently arranged and far too long for the viewer to read in its entirety, still told a history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Pacific relations. *Talking Tapa* is not an anthropological exhibition of historical curios, tribal art, or artefacts, but nor is it a display of visual art in a European sense. The meaning of tapa lies in processes, not solely in the object itself. The processes of manufacture, exchange, and collection are translated and recounted in the exhibition didactics, drawing on historical material as well as personal narratives. As a result of the diversity of the objects, there was no single narrative thread connecting the labelling content and each cloth was interpreted from a different perspective, or several. In the end it successfully represented the coming together of western and indigenous Pacific cultural discourses.

**References**


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Hannah Perkins is completing a BA Honours at Queensland University of Technology. Her dissertation is on labelling practices for indigenous exhibits in museums and galleries. In 2007, she was awarded a Vacation Research Scholarship for a project creating a database of published Pacific Island photographs in the Queenslander and in 2009 she was Research Assistant for a regional web-based Pacific Studies eBook project.
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An Olinda Night

A crossbow of stars burn through
the rippling white sea-shore clouds,
sheets of mauve-blue slip off the moon
to wrap around the skeletal bowed
silhouettes of the gum trees laden with milky dew.
You notice the pine pyramid shroud, searching the night sky for guidance
Yet, all we get is Orion burning his ships
Upon the silver change hauling cold
From the south, where claves blow ice-blue
Spouts circling their calves with gentle
Motions; keeping the wind on my brow.

MARK CORNELL,
HEATHMONT, VIC.
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