



## STATE OF THE PACIFIC

### 4-5 SEPTEMBER 2024

#### Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2024

8.00 – 8.45: Registration

8.45 – 9.45: Opening Session (Coombs Lecture Theatre)

- Welcome to Country
- Welcome from the CAP Dean, Professor Helen Sullivan
- Keynote Address: Hon. T. Roka Matbob – *Bougainville's Self-Determination Journey*

9.45 – 10.15: Morning refreshments

Time	'A' Stream Panels (Coombs Theatre)	'B' Stream Panels (Hedley Bull 1)
10.15-11.45	<p><b><i>Unfinished Decolonisation: What's Next?</i></b></p> <p>Panel Convenor: Jay Evett PhD Candidate, ANU</p>	<p><b><i>Disability, Equity and Rights: Pacific Research and Implementing UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</i></b></p> <p>Panel Convenor: Lee Brentnall PhD Candidate, ANU</p>
11.45-1.15	<p><b><i>External Self-Determination Processes and Arrangements</i></b></p> <p>Panel Convenor: Anthony Regan, Professor, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU</p>	<p><b><i>Pacific Education Transformations</i></b></p> <p>Panel Convenor: David Oakeshott Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU</p>
1.15-2.15	<p>Lunch: <i>Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility</i> (Hedley Bull 2)</p> <p>Christopher Richter, regional specialist on Regular Migration, Environment and Climate Change</p>	
2.15-3.45	<p><b><i>Challenges of Cross-Border Displacement</i></b></p> <p>Panel Convenors: Katerina Teaiwa, Professor, College of Asia and the Pacific, ANU &amp; Rebecca Monson, Professor, College of Law, ANU</p>	<p><b><i>Awkward AUKUS</i></b></p> <p>Panel Convenor: Philippa Louey PhD Candidate, ANU</p>

3.45-4.15	Afternoon refreshments	
4.15-5.45	<p><b><i>Inclusive Political Systems</i></b></p> <p>Panel Convenor: Kerry Baker Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU</p>	<p><b><i>Pacific Criminology</i></b></p> <p>Panel Convenor: Henrietta McNeill Research Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU</p>

## Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2024

9.00 – 10.30: Opening Session (Coombs Lecture Theatre)

- Keynote Address: President M. Brotherson: *French Polynesia's Self-Determination Journey*
- DPA Presentation: Nicole Haley, Colin Wiltshire and Thiago Oppermann: *Methodological Advances in Melanesian Election Analysis*

10.30 – 11.00: Morning refreshments

Time	'A' Stream Panels (Coombs Theatre)	'B' Stream Panels (Hedley Bull 1)
11.00-12.30	<p><b><i>Geopolitics: External Engagement</i></b></p> <p>Panel Convenor: Denghua Zhang Research Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU</p>	<p><b><i>Climate Change Mitigation</i></b></p> <p>Panel Convenor: Paul D'Arcy Professor, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU</p>
12.30-1.30	Lunch: <i>Pacific Political Geography Network</i> (Hedley Bull 2)	
1.30-3.00	<p><b><i>Geopolitics: Pacific Island Perceptions</i></b></p> <p>Panel Convenor: Meg Keen Director, Pacific Island Program, Lowy Institute and Honorary Professor, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU</p>	<p><b><i>Environmental Peacebuilding</i></b></p> <p>Panel Convenor: Anouk Ride Research Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU</p>
3.00-3.30	Afternoon refreshments	
3.30-5.00	<p><b><i>Digital Connectivity with the World</i></b></p> <p>Panel Convenor: Amanda H A Watson Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU</p>	<p><b><i>Tides of Change: Pacific Migration to Australia</i></b></p> <p>Panel Convenor: Rochelle-Lee Bailey Research Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU</p>

5.00-5.45: DPA Presentation: Kerry Baker: *Pacific Attitudes Survey, Vanuatu*

# Panel details

## 'A' Stream (Coombs Lecture Theatre)

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### *Unfinished Decolonisation: What's Next?*

Panel Convenor: Jay Evett, PhD Candidate, ANU,  
Day: 4 September 2024  
Time: 10.15-11.45am

It's as true for countries as it is for people that we can get distracted by new things without first finishing what we were already doing. Where the shifting geopolitics that sandwiches the Pacific in between a new cold war has caught our eye, we risk leaving the remains of the last century's decolonisation unfinished.

This session is a *kōrero* between voices championing efforts to decolonise the last vestiges of direct control of Pacific peoples. Over an hour, discussants will weave their experiences, frustrations and aspirations through a facilitated discussion to present a metaphorical mat detailing what's left to do, what stands in the way, and what it'll take to get where people want to be. Followed by a 30-minute Q&A session.

- Solstice (Soli) Middleby, PhD Candidate, University of Adelaide (Chair)
  - Kenneth Kuper, Associate Professor of Political Science, CHamoru Studies, and Micronesian Studies, University of Guam
  - Lise Hope-Suveinakama, Lawyer and Former Legal Advisor to the Tokelauan Government
  - Ronny Kareni, West Papuan Diplomat and Activist
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### *External Self-Determination Processes and Arrangements*

Panel Convenor: Anthony Regan, Professor, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU  
Day: 4 September 2024  
Time: 11.45-1.15pm

External self-determination processes involve seeking independence through legal and/or political processes, as in West Papua, Bougainville, New Caledonia, Guam, French Polynesia and Cook Islands (which is seeking UN membership). This panel will focus on New Caledonia, Guam and Bougainville. It will also look to the experience of both process and actual external self-determination arrangements for three Micronesian states – FSM, RMI and Palau – where despite gaining 'independence' in 1986 and UN membership in 1991, their 'parent' state, the USA, retains significant 'roles' and powers, under compacts of 'free association' and subsidiary agreements. To what extent does that 'model' of external self-determination offer possibilities to consider in other processes?

- *External Self-Determination (Independence) under the Micronesian 'Free Association Arrangements'*  
Gonzaga Puas, Professor at Pacific Islands University and Founder of Micronesia Institute of Research and Development
- *Considering Alternative External Self-Determination Models in the Bougainville Context*  
Anthony Regan, Professor, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU
- *Guam's Self-Determination Journey*  
Kenneth Kuper, Associate Professor of Political Science, CHamoru Studies, and Micronesian Studies, University of Guam
- *New Caledonia's Self-Determination Issue, Post Referendums?*  
Nic Maclellan, Journalist, Islands Business and freelancer

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### ***Challenges of Cross-Border Displacement***

Panel Convenors: Katerina Teaiwa, Professor, College of Asia and the Pacific, ANU & Rebecca Monson, Professor, College of Law, ANU

Day: 4 September 2024

Time: 2.15-3.45pm

This panel will discuss the political, legal, environmental and cultural challenges experienced by two unique communities in the Pacific: the Banabans/Rabi Islanders of Kiribati and Fiji, and the Gilbertese/i-Kiribati people of Solomon Islands. While their experiences differ, both groups were relocated due to resource degradation and dispossession wrought by colonisation, and both now have unique legal entitlements and struggles. Their experiences provide critical lessons for a climate-affected future, as well as for the experiences of the Kiribati/Gilbertese diaspora which is growing through labour mobility schemes.

- Katerina Teaiwa, Professor, College of Asia and the Pacific, ANU
- Itinterunga Rae Bainteiti, Coordinator, Banaban Human Rights Defenders Network, Kiribati
- Rebecca Monson, Professor, College of Law, ANU
- Anna Dziedzic, Programme Officer for Constitution-Building Processes, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), Canberra

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### ***Inclusive Political Systems***

Panel Convenor: Kerryn Baker, Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU

Day: 4 September 2024

Time: 4.15-5.45pm

How are inclusive political systems created? The issue of inclusive participatory structures should be at the heart of political reform initiatives. This is of particular importance in the Pacific region, where elected political bodies have not always reflected the diverse societies that voted them in: for instance, the Pacific has the lowest levels of women's political representation of any world region. This panel will explore recent constitutional and electoral reform in the region and the prospects for building inclusive political systems. In a region with a long history of democratic innovation, there are clear opportunities for transformation in terms of who gets a seat at the political table.

- *The 2022 Tuvalu Constitutional Process: How Inclusive?*  
Kiali Molu, PhD Candidate, University of the South Pacific & University of Bergen
- *Collective Ownership & the Pacific Youth Forum: Finding the Subjecthood (co-authored with Associate Professor Tamara Young)*  
Caitlin Mollica, Lecturer, University of Newcastle
- *Seeking Equal Participation of Women and Men in Provincial Assemblies through Legislative Reform in the Solomon Islands – The Journey to Caucus and Cabinet*  
Irene Kaumi, Legal Counsel, Government of Solomon Islands
- *Navigating Political Transitions: Gender-Inclusive Reforms and Democratic Evolution in Fiji*  
Romitesh Kant, PhD Candidate, ANU

### ***Geopolitics: External Engagement***

Panel Convenor: Denghua Zhang, Research Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU

Day: 5 September 2024

Time: 11.00-12.30pm

Geostrategic competition between the traditional powers and China is intensifying in the Pacific. The US, Australia and France have deepened cooperation with Pacific island countries and territories. Concurrently, China has intensified its engagement, particularly in strategically important countries; it has secured increased political recognition and established six centres to promote its cooperation with Pacific island countries. In this session, the speakers will discuss these external players' engagement with Pacific islands, including the main features and potential impact on the region.

- *Micronesia-US Relations: The Crafting of a Violent Geography?*  
Kenneth Kuper, Associate Professor of Political Science, CHamoru Studies, and Micronesian Studies, University of Guam
- *Australia-Pacific Relations in a Time of Geopolitical Competition: Pulling in the Same Direction?*  
Mihaï Sora, Director of the Pacific Islands Program, Lowy Institute
- *Reassessing China's engagement with Pacific island countries over the last five decades from a poststructuralist perspective*  
Geyi (Azure) Xie, PhD Candidate, University of Adelaide
- *France in the Pacific: Anchored or Adrift?*  
Raihaamana (Mana) Henri Tevahitua, PhD Candidate, ANU

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### ***Geopolitics: Pacific Island Perceptions***

Panel Convenor: Meg Keen, Director, Pacific Island Program, Lowy Institute and Honorary Professor, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU

Day: 5 September 2024

Time: 1.30-3.00pm

Pacific island countries leverage geopolitical competition to advance development goals and national interests, but the high levels of aid and diplomatic courting come with risks. Small bureaucracies can be overwhelmed and diverted from core business. Allegations of elite capture by donors erode public confidence and can lead to social protest. The proliferation of security agreements and MOUs is overwhelming local implementation capacity and is often not aligned to local policies and priorities. In this session, leading thinkers from the Pacific islands discuss geopolitical competition, its impact on domestic development, and their vision for a globally engaged region that puts the Pacific first.

This panel session will begin with opening remarks from each panellist followed by a Q&A session.

- *Climate Resilience and Geopolitical Challenges in the Pacific Islands*  
Akka Rimon, School of Regulation and Governance (RegNet), ANU (Kiribati)
- *Geopolitical Competition and Pacific Security*  
Oliver Nobetau, FDC-Lowy Institute Pacific Fellow (PNG)
- *Transparency in Times of Geopolitical Rivalry*  
Ms Ruth Liloqula, Transparency International (Solomon Islands)

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### ***Digital Connectivity with the World***

Panel Convenor: Amanda H A Watson, Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU

Day: 5 September 2024

Time: 3.30-5.00pm

Digital connectivity enables communication between the Pacific Islands region and the outside world. This panel will focus on digital connections in the Pacific. In particular, it will focus on three types of digital connection technologies: undersea communication cables, communication satellites, and mobile telecommunication networks.

In all three cases, these technologies will be interrogated with respect to access and the user experience. Access is impacted by infrastructure developments, regulatory settings, corporate strategies and, where applicable, donor engagement. Key concerns regarding the user experience include usability, pricing and reliability.

The aim of the panel will be to shine a spotlight on a technological field that is changing at a fast pace. The panel discussion will relate these changes to everyday access to, and use of, telecommunications and the internet in Pacific Island countries.

- *Connecting Within and from Afar: The Status of Digital Connectivity in Samoa*  
Ioana Chan Mow, National University of Samoa
- *Cable Connectivity and Resilience in the Pacific: Australian Government Initiatives*  
Jamie Isbister, Deputy Head, Office of the Pacific, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- *Transforming the State of the Pacific: Universal Connectivity with Kacific's Satellite Solutions*  
Jacques-Samuel Proton, Executive Vice President - Corporate Development, Kacific Broadband Satellites Ltd.

## 'B' Stream Panels (Hedley Bull 1)

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### ***Disability, Equity and Rights: Pacific Research and Implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities***

Panel Convenor: Lee Brentnall, PhD Candidate, ANU  
Day: 4 September 2024  
Time: 10.15-11.45am

People with disabilities in the Pacific region are more vulnerable to the impacts and challenges of climate change, health security and social inequities such as gender inequality, and are often excluded in work on disaster response, education and health planning. With most Pacific Island Forum countries ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, each nation has a responsibility to ensure the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities with respect to working towards national and regional priorities and agendas. This panel will highlight some important disability inclusion and equity research initiatives in the Pacific region; and considerations of the cross sectoral collaboration required to ensure access, equity and the practical realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities to ensure sustainable, safe and healthy futures for all in the Pacific.

- Almah Kuambu, Technical Adviser, National Orthotics and Prosthetics Services, National Department of Health, PNG
- Tabaia Iakobwa, Office Manager, Te Toa Mataoa, Kiribati
- Faatino Utumapu, Manager, Nuanua O Le Alofa (NOLA), Samoa
- Kevin Akike, Director - Technical Assistance, National Capital District DiffAbilities Advocacy Agency, PNG

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### ***Pacific Education Transformations***

Panel Convenor: David Oakeshott, Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU  
Day: 4 September 2024  
Time: 11.45-1.15pm

This panel seeks to learn from current efforts underway in the region to transform formal education systems and schools in ways that serve people and place better. It will put new policy developments at regional and national levels into dialogue with changes taking place in university departments, school classrooms, and even grassroots education initiatives adjacent to formal schooling. Panellists will share insights from the Pacific Regional Education Framework 2018–2030, Solomon Islands National University, and the classrooms of New Caledonia and Solomon Islands.

- *Shadows and Lights in New Caledonian Schools? What Paths to Reconciliation?*  
Clara Filippi, PhD Candidate, Catholic University of Louvain
- *Pacific Regional Education Policy: What, and Who, Is It Good For?*  
Rebecca Spratt, Independent Education Development Specialist and Research Assistant, Australian Catholic University
- *Community-Led Language Education in Solomon Islands: Challenges and Possibilities*  
Debra McDougall, Associate Professor, University of Melbourne
- *Embracing Education Reforms: The Solomon Islands National University's Role in Preparing Teachers for the Future*  
Patricia Rodie, Dean of Faculty of Education and Humanities, Solomon Islands National University

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### ***Awkward AUKUS***

Panel Convenor: Philippa Louey, Jope Tarai, PhD Candidates, ANU  
Day: 4 September 2024  
Time: 2.15-3.45pm

Ever since its announcement in 2021, the AUKUS security partnership has sat somewhat awkwardly in the Pacific. Led by three of the region's main traditional security partners – Australia, the UK and the USA – AUKUS promises to promote a secure and stable Indo-Pacific, covering an expansive maritime region in which the Pacific Islands is positioned as a strategic linchpin. For the communities and leaders of many Pacific Island communities, however, the AUKUS program has been received with a mixture of caution and unease. Pacific representatives have raised concerns on various fronts, not least regarding its securitisation agenda and respect for the Pacific's proud nuclear-free position.

This intergenerational panel will explore the relationship between AUKUS and the Pacific Islands region, drawing on a range of perspectives from Australia and Oceania. It will examine how the program impacts partnerships with and within the Pacific Islands region and unpack key details of both AUKUS pillar one and pillar two.

- Jope Tarai (Chair), PhD Candidate, ANU
- Marco de Jong, Lecturer, Law School, Auckland University of Technology
- Maualaivao Maima Koro, Pacific Research Fellow, School of Social Sciences, The University of Adelaide
- Hugh White, Emeritus Professor of Strategic Studies, School of International, Political & Strategic Studies, ANU

### ***Pacific Criminology***

Panel Convenor: Henrietta McNeill, Research Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU  
Day: 4 September 2024  
Time: 4.15-5.45pm

In 2013, John Braithwaite called for a Pacific criminology. Miranda Forsyth, Sinclair Dinnen and Fiona Hukula followed up on this call in 2019, but they also questioned the purpose and value of yet a(nother) 'Northern' disciplinary lens being applied to the Pacific region. In doing so, they helped open up a conversation around a Pacific-led criminology, one that foregrounds understandings and approaches to crime and justice through a Pacific lens and which highlights the actual and potential role of local structures rather than reliance on colonial institutions. This conversation was augmented at the inaugural Pacific Criminology Symposium in 2023 and is one that this panel seeks to build upon. The panel seeks to contribute to scholarship which looks at policing, crime and justice issues and responses at multiple levels in the Pacific Islands region that is inspired by local institutions, culture and practice.

- *Fakananunu: Exploring Forms of Order in the Pacific*  
Maualaivao Maima Koro, University of Adelaide
- *Mapping Non-State Justice Institutions in Papua New Guinea*  
Miranda Forsyth, Professor, RegNet, ANU
- *Transnational Collaborations: Combatting Money Laundering in Papua New Guinea*  
Michael Kabuni, PhD Candidate, ANU
- *The Future of Pacific Criminology*  
Moses Faleolo, Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington

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### ***Climate Change Mitigation***

Panel Convenor: Paul D'Arcy, Professor, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU  
Day: 5 September 2024  
Time: 11.00-12.30pm

The just-released report by the UN's World Meteorological Organization (WMO) on unprecedented ocean warming in 2023 makes a compelling case for prioritising ocean ecosystem adaptation and resilience in the Pacific. The greater heat retention of ocean waters in comparison to the atmosphere is affecting different marine ecosystems in different ways, none of which are beneficial. The ocean is a key aspect of Pacific nutrition, economy and identity. This panel draws on the expertise of individuals from Pasifika communities involved in successful projects to protect and revive fisheries across a variety of marine ecosystems, together with key problems they face from coral bleaching to illegal fishing and pollution, with the aim of achieving community engagement through empowerment relative to scientific oversight, governmental regulation, and regional planning.

- *Navigating Our Ocean Priorities: Regional Approaches to Ocean Governance*  
Logovaka Marilyn Moira Simmons, Ocean Engagement Lead, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat - Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner
- *Building Tools to Manage Coral Reef Fisheries with and for Communities*  
Marguerite, Rereatara Taiarui, PhD Candidate in fisheries biology and Rahui Center (Centre de ressources pour les Rahui), CRIIBE - EPHE (Centre de recherche insulaire et observatoire de l'environnement - École Pratique des Hautes Études)
- *Community-Based Engagement for Sustainable Ocean-Based Tourism*  
Amelia Faotusia, PhD Candidate, ANU and former Tongan Government economist

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### ***Environmental Peacebuilding***



Panel Convenor: Anouk Ride, Research Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU  
Day: 5 September 2024  
Time: 1.30-3.00pm

Environmental conflicts are experienced in many parts of the Pacific islands, particularly in situations involving indigenous peoples and land use agreements. This panel draws on in-depth studies by researchers from within indigenous communities to compare local experiences of environmental rupture, conflict and change. Furthermore, the panel explores the unique relationship of indigenous people with terrestrial and marine areas, and the culpability of actors at national and global levels in fostering conflicts, with a view towards how to foster peace.

- *Environmental Conflicts in Solomon Islands and Ways Forward*  
Dr Transform Aqorau, Vice Chancellor, Solomon Islands University
- *Spreading the Love from Environmental Extraction: The North Fly Rubber Project*  
Henry Ivarature, Deputy Director of the Pacific Security College at ANU
- *Gender Perceptions on Climate Induced Conflicts and Peacebuilding in Solomon Islands*  
Ruth Maetala, Founder and Director of Dignity Pasifik
- *Embedding Natural Resource Development in Place-Based Worldviews: The Case of Peacebuilding in Oil Palm Developments on Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands*  
Lincy Pendevevana, Head of Geography, Solomon Islands National University

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#### *Tides of Change: Pacific Migration to Australia*

Panel Convenor: Rochelle-Lee Bailey, Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU  
Day: 5 September 2024  
Time: 3.30-5.00pm

Australia's Pacific Island migration policies have evolved over 15 years from temporary labour schemes to the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme (PALM), and the permanent Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV). This panel highlights migration trends and potential migration pathways for the Pacific and Timor-Leste. A longitudinal research paper highlights long-term migration impacts on children and the culture of migration in seasonal worker programs. Pacific academics will examine the experiences, impacts and needs of past and current migrants and their own migration stories, to better understand policy impacts on Australia's Pacific diaspora. Goals include mitigating potential negative consequences and enabling government agencies to make better informed decisions, while acknowledging challenges, such as limited availability of accurate migrant experience data, cultural biases in research, etc. raising questions about the validity of current research methods.

- *Pacific Freedom of Movement: Where to Next?*  
Stephen Howes, DevPol, ANU
- *Impacts of Long-Term Seasonal Work Participation on Children and Intergenerational Migration in Vanuatu*  
Rochelle Bailey, Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU
- *Understanding Pacific Migrants' Wellbeing Perspectives and Experiences in Australia Using Indigenised Mixed Methods Research and Decolonised Frameworks*  
Ruth Faleolo, La Trobe University & Griffith University
- *Navigating Positionality and Relationality through Ethics*  
Siaosi Gavet, Telusa Tu'i'onetoa, and Natasha Turia-Moka, PhD Candidates, ANU