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Australian  
National  
University

Department of  
Pacific Affairs

# State of the Pacific 2026

14-16 April 2026  
Coombs & Hedley Bull Lecture Theatres  
9 Fellows Road, ANU

Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs  
College of Asia & the Pacific

# About State of the Pacific 2026

The State of the Pacific (SotP) conference is a flagship event of the Pacific Research Program, held every two years. The conference showcases the research partnerships active through the Pacific Research Program. It convenes scholars, policymakers, practitioners, business leaders, civil society representatives, and community leaders to engage with the evolving challenges and emerging opportunities shaping the Pacific region.

## *Weaving Pacific Research Relationships*

Centred on the theme, 'Weaving Pacific Research Relationships', SotP 2026 seeks to engage in dialogue on long-term partnerships grounded in Pacific values. Like weaving, impactful research and policy require collaboration, trust, and care. The theme demonstrates work across cultures, disciplines, and generations to co-create knowledge that is meaningful, resilient, and rooted in the interests, aspirations, and needs of Pacific communities.

The conference will critically reflect on how research, policy, knowledge exchange, and cross-sector partnerships can strengthen Pacific futures. Discussions will weave together diverse perspectives — across disciplines, across communities, and across borders — reflecting the interconnectedness that underpins Pacific ways of knowing, working, and being. In doing so, we will aim to foster dialogue and collaboration that are not only inclusive but enduring, as we collectively navigate the region's complex challenges and possibilities.

SotP 2026 will run over three days, featuring two parallel streams each day. These streams will explore telecommunications, ballot visas,

France in the Pacific, peacebuilding initiatives, labour mobility, gender, Pacific/Melanesian research and big data, legal and justice approaches, corruption, money laundering, crime and safety, climate diplomacy, and the power of Pacific partnerships.

## 2026 SotP Committee

*Academic staff sub-group:* Dr Mercy Masta (co-convenor), Dr Rochelle Bailey, Professor Meg Keen, Associate Professor Sonia Palmieri, Associate Professor Anouk Ride, Associate Professor Graeme Smith and Dr Amanda H A Watson.

*Professional staff sub-group:* Dr Jessie Chella (co-convenor), Lyndsi Davies, Hannah McMahon, Stephanie Russo, and Dr Angela Terrill.

*HDR Student Representatives:* Lin Sae-Phoo and Natasha Turia.

## Social Media

Please help promote the conference using #SOTP2026 and tagging the following accounts on X:

ANU Department of Pacific Affairs @ANUDPA  
ANU Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs  
@ANUBellSchool

Australian National University @ourANU  
ANU Crawford School of Public Policy  
@ANUCrawford

## Free WIFI

Guest Username: **SOTP2026**  
Guest Password: **SOTPGuest**

# Keynote Speaker



## Her Excellency Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa

*Former Prime Minister of Samoa*

Her Excellency Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa entered the Samoan Parliament in 1985, at the age of 27. She served as a Cabinet Minister from 1991 to 2025 and was the first woman in her country to hold the offices of Cabinet Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Prime Minister. Portfolios she has held include Education, Youth, Sports and Culture; Labour; Women, Communities and Social Development; Justice and Courts Administration; Lands, Climate Change and Environment. As Prime Minister, she was chairperson of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in October 2024 held in Apia and remained as chairperson until September 2025. She is a current MP and is the Leader of the Samoa Uniting Party.

Fiamē's political career is deeply grounded in Samoa's traditional and customary community structures, rooted in extended family systems, village governance, and the Christian faith. Her leadership reflects the lived integration of village, district, and national responsibilities, shaped by decades of public service and sustained engagement in the non-government sector.

Throughout her career, Fiamē has been a strong advocate for women's and girls' development, gender equity, education especially higher education, health, and broader social development. These commitments are closely linked to her long-standing leadership on climate change action and justice, recognising climate change as not only an environmental challenge, but a moral, social, and governance issue affecting Pacific livelihoods, sovereignty, and future generations.

At the regional and global levels, Fiamē has demonstrated principled leadership in Pacific politics, good governance, and international advocacy. She has played a prominent role in advancing Pacific voices in regional forums and global processes, particularly on climate justice, resilience, and the rights of small island developing states. Her leadership bridges local realities and global agendas, ensuring Pacific priorities remain visible and credible on the world stage.

Fiamē's commitment to inclusive and accountable governance is further reflected in her leadership of women's institutions. She has served with distinction in the Samoa National Council of Women, strengthening women's collective participation in national decision-making. She is also the founding Chairperson of Women in Leadership Advocates (WinLA), a public-sector women's advocacy organisation established to mentor women leaders and to track, review, and advocate for government gender policies.

In recognition of her contributions to all spheres of society in Samoa and the Pacific region, Fiamē was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws by the National University of Samoa in March 2024, and an Honorary Doctor of Letters by the University of the South Pacific in December 2018.

Fiamē is a traditional paramount chiefly title which was conferred on Naomi in 1977.

# Event Program

## Day 1 – Tuesday, 14 April 2026

- 08.15–09.00 Registration (Hedley Bull Building Atrium)
- 08.30–09.00 Smoking ceremony (outside area near Coombs Lecture Theatre)
- 09.00–09.50 Opening session (Coombs Lecture Theatre):  
 \*Welcome to Country  
 \*Prayer for Day 1  
 \*Welcome from the College of Asia and the Pacific Dean, Professor Helen Sullivan  
 \*Opening Remarks from The Honourable Pat Conroy MP, Minister for Pacific Island Affairs and Minister for Defence Industry  
 \*Keynote Address from Her Excellency Fiamē Naomi Mata’afa, former Prime Minister of Samoa  
 \*Invitation to take a group photo  
 \*Conference Theme Reflection Activity: Weaving Materially-Relationally-Conceptually with Dr Nayahamui Rooney, School of Culture, History and Language, ANU
- 09.50–10.30 Morning refreshments

Time	Stream A Coombs Lecture Theatre	Stream B Hedley Bull Lecture Theatre 1
<b>Session 1</b> 10.30–12.00	<i>People-centred Climate Action (COP31)</i> Convenor: George Carter	<i>Gender Reimagined: Pacific Perspectives Retold</i> Convenors: Anouk Ride & Mercy Masta
12.00–13.00	Lunch	
<b>Session 2</b> 13.00–14.30	<i>Pacific Ballot Visas: Policies and Experiences</i> Convenors: Stephen Howes & Natasha Turia	<i>Responding to Corruption and Money Laundering in Papua New Guinea</i> Convenor: Michael Kabuni
14.30–15.00	Afternoon refreshments	
<b>Session 3</b> 15.00–16.30	<i>France in the South Pacific: Power and Politics Revisited</i> Convenor: Nicholas Hoare	<i>Connecting Peacebuilding Initiatives across Papua New Guinea</i> Convenors: Sinclair Dinnen & Miranda Forsyth

Day 2 – Wednesday, 15 April 2026

Time	Stream A Coomb's Lecture Theatre	Stream B Hedley Bull Lecture Theatre 1
<b>Session 4</b> 09.00–10.30	<i>Money, Crime, and Corruption</i> Convenor: Graeme Smith	<i>Risk and Resilience: Investigating and Promoting Personal and Community Safety</i> Convenor: Judy Putt
10.30–11.00	Morning refreshments	
<b>Session 5</b> 11.00–12.30	<i>Big Data for Pacific Democracy: Challenges and Opportunities - PNG National Election Report and LLG Report</i> Convenor: Thiago Oppermann	<i>Beyond Extraction: Indigenous and Relational Approaches to Melanesian Research</i> Convenors: Mercy Masta & Theresa Meki
12.30–13.30	Lunch	
<b>Session 6</b> 13.30–15.00	<i>Inspired Pacific Research That Made Legal History: Pacific Approaches to ICJ Advisory Opinion</i> Convenors: Rebecca Monson & Romitesh Kant	<i>Partners for Peace: Lessons from and for Bougainville's Office of Missing Persons</i> Convenor: David Oakeshott
15.00–16.00	Afternoon refreshments Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI) <i>Tonga Poll</i> launch Chair: Gemma Malungahu	

## Day 3–Thursday, 16 April 2026

### Session 7

09.00–10.30 The Power of Pacific Partnerships: Research, Capacity, and Policy Leadership (Coombs Lecture Theatre)  
Convenor: Elizabeth Peak, Deputy Secretary and Head of the Office of the Pacific, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
\*Prayer for Day 3

10.30–11.00 Morning refreshments

Time	Stream A Coombs Lecture Theatre	Stream B Hedley Bull Lecture Theatre 1
<b>Session 8</b> 11.00–12.30	<i>From Labour Mobility to Integration: Migration to, from, within the Pacific</i> Convenor: Ryan Edwards	<i>Starlink's Arrival and Changes to Communication Access in the Pacific</i> Convenor: Amanda H A Watson
12.30–13.30	Lunch	
<b>Session 9</b> 13.30–15.00	<i>Making Headlines: Pacific Media, Information and Influence</i> Convenor: Anouk Ride	
15.00–15.30	Afternoon refreshments	
<b>Session 10</b> 15.30–17.00	<i>Oceanic Diplomacy Plenary Session and Book Launch</i> Convenor: George Carter	
17.00–17.30	<b>Closing Remarks</b> (including closing prayer)	

\*Note all refreshments will be served in the Hedley Bull Building Atrium.

# Panel Details

## 'A' Stream (Coombs Lecture Theatre)

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### *People-centred Climate Action (COP31)*

Panel Convenor: Salā Dr George Carter, Fellow, DPA, ANU  
Day 1: Tuesday, 14 April 2026  
Time: 10.30 – 12.00

People-centred Climate Action explores the intertwined futures of climate resilience, innovation, and community across Oceania. The panel brings together research collaborations from science, policy, and Indigenous knowledge systems from the Pacific to Australia. A unique aspect of Pacific Australia climate (adaptation and mitigation) partnerships has been the prevalence of the people-centred approach inspired by wisdom of land, sea and sky that complements science to bring forth innovation in climate policy. By harnessing the lived experiences of Oceanic peoples and the collaborative research emerging from Pacific and Australian universities, regional organisations, and local communities the panel highlights climate solutions that are grounded in cultural integrity, equity, and ecological care.

- H.E. Will Nankervis, Ambassador for Climate Change Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
  - Filomena Nelson, Climate Change Advisor, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)
  - Kesaya Baba, Senior Manager, COP31 Strategy and Partnerships, WWF-Australia
  - Barbara Ibuai, Founder and Principal, Climate Collective Zenadth Kes, Torres Strait Islands Australia
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### *Pacific Ballot Visas: Policies and Experiences*

Panel Convenors: Professor Stephen Howes, Director, Development Policy Centre, ANU and Natasha Turia, PhD Candidate, DPA, ANU  
Day 1: Tuesday, 14 April 2026  
Time: 13.00 – 14.30

Both Australia and New Zealand now operate 'ballot visas' that provide permanent residence to thousands of Pacific citizens every year. These ballots are very popular and represent the deepest form of pan-Pacific integration yet seen. Yet very little is known about these visas; the New Zealand ballot visa is under-researched and the Australian ballot visa is new. An active program of research is underway to better understand migrant experience in relation to the ballot visas. This session will present initial findings and explore as-yet unanswered questions.

- *An Overview of the Pacific ballot visas*  
Professor Stephen Howes, Director, Development Policy Centre, ANU
- *The Pacific Engagement Visa: Two Years In*  
Alison Carrington, Assistant Secretary, Integration and Education Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
- *PNG Experience in the PEV*  
Natasha Turia, PhD Candidate, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU
- *Kiribati Experience in the PEV and NZ PAC*  
Akka Rimon, Research and Engagement Fellow, Pacific Security College, ANU

## ***France in the South Pacific: Power and Politics Revisited***

Panel Convenor: Dr Nicholas Hoare, Pacific History Research Fellow, DPA, ANU

Day 1: Tuesday, 14 April 2026

Time: 15.00 – 16.30

Reflecting on the state of the French-speaking Pacific, much has changed since the publication of Denise Fisher's *France in the South Pacific: Power and Politics* in 2013: a botched decolonisation referendum process in Kanaky-New Caledonia and the resurgence of the pro-independence Tavini party in Mā'ohi Nui French Polynesia; the launch of AUKUS and the birth of France's Indo-Pacific strategy; a French-led call for a global moratorium on deep-sea mining and a Gaullist return to '*la dissuasion avancée* or nuclear deterrence. This panel revisits France's role in the region through the themes of power and politics, with a renewed emphasis on local, national, and regional actions. Despite all this change, Fisher's 2013 observation remains as relevant as ever: 'France's future in the region has yet to be secured'. *Plus ça change...*

- *New Caledonia, France, and the Indo Pacific*  
Denise Fisher, Visiting Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, and Centre for European Studies
- *Kanaky–New Caledonia: Political Transition, Self-Governance and Pacific Regionalism*  
Jimmy Naouna, Senior Advisor on Regional and Multilateral Affairs
- *The 'Grey Zones': Areas of Compromise in Kanaky and/or New Caledonia*  
Dr Anthony Tutugoro, Chercheur Post-doctoral ANR Inclusive Peace, Enseignant Vacataire Laboratoire de Recherches Juridique & Économique (LARJE), Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie
- *French Polynesia, a Lever of France's Indo-Pacific?*  
Raihaamana Tevahitua, PhD Candidate, DPA, ANU

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## ***Money, Crime and Corruption***

Panel Convenor: Associate Professor Graeme Smith, DPA, ANU

Day 2: Wednesday, 15 April 2026

Time: 09.00 – 10.30

This panel will weave together research on crime and corruption in three different Pacific countries: Fiji, PNG, and Solomon Islands. The panel seeks to identify important challenges faced by the Pacific broadly, brought by the evolution of transnational crime networks and associated political corruption. Criminal networks to be investigated include those related to extractive industries, drug trafficking, and human trafficking for sex work and online scams.

- Michael Kabuni, PhD Candidate, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU
- Associate Professor Grant Walton FHEA, Politics and Governance (PoGo) Department and Development Policy Centre, Crawford School of Public Policy, ANU
- Associate Professor Anouk Ride, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU
- Virginia Comolli, Head of Pacific Programme, Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) and Visiting Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU

***Big Data for Pacific Democracy: Challenges and Opportunities – 2022 PNG National Election Report and 2025 Local Level Government (LLG) Elections Report***

Panel Convenor: Dr Thiago Cintra Oppermann, DPA, ANU

Day 2: Wednesday, 15 April 2026

Time: 11.00 – 12.30

This panel brings together new research and rapid-turnaround election analysis from PNG. The panel will discuss findings from the PNG Election Report published in December, alongside insights from the Local-Level Government (LLG) election observation conducted by the Women's Leadership Network, with its forthcoming report to be released in April. In addition, the panel will present newly compiled data from the Dei Open by-election held in February. A central focus of the panel is the methodological innovation, which demonstrates how newly developed analytical pipelines—building on our 2022 framework—enable high-quality election reporting within months for LLG elections and within weeks for by-elections such as Dei. These streamlined processes significantly reduce cost, improve accessibility, and accelerate evidence-based electoral analysis, offering a scalable model for timely democratic accountability in the Pacific.

- Dr Thiago Cintra Oppermann, Research Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU
- Professor Nicole Haley, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU
- Sarah Kende, Project Lead, Advancing PNG: Women Leaders Network, PNG
- Margaret Aila, former Board Member of Advancing PNG: Women Leaders Network and Director of Bay Women's Skills Centre, Alotau, Milne Bay Province, PNG

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***Inspired Pacific Research That Made Legal History: Pacific Approaches to ICJ Advisory Opinion***

Panel Convenors: Professor Rebecca Monson, ANU Law School and Romitesh Kant, Research Fellow, DPA, ANU

Panel Chair: Romitesh Kant, Research Fellow, DPA, ANU

Day 2: Wednesday, 15 April 2026

Time: 13.30 – 15.00

This panel considers the region's leading role in securing the groundbreaking International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on States' obligations with respect to climate change. Papers address the innovative and distinct ways in which Pacific States developed and provided evidence, stories, and arguments, and consider how these shape international law. The panel also considers lessons learned from collaborations across generations and disciplines and between Pacific 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. The panel opens discussion on how to deepen collaborations and build on the Advisory Opinion.

- *The ICJ, Prefigurative Legalities and Ancestral Futures*  
Professor Rebecca Monson, ANU Law School
- *Understanding the ICJ Climate Advisory Opinion in Times of Crisis*  
Fuimaono Dylan Asafo, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Law, University of Auckland and PhD Candidate, Law School, University of Melbourne
- *Climate Change and Cultural Loss: An ICJ Opportunity*  
Anna Naupa, PhD Candidate, School of Culture, History and Language, ANU and Research Fellow, Pacific Security College, ANU

### ***Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI) Tonga Poll Launch***

Chair: Dr Gemma Malungahu, Pacific Fellow, DPA, ANU  
Day 2: Wednesday, 15 April 2026  
Time: 15.00 – 16.00

Join us for the official launch of 'The TTI Tonga Poll: Understanding Tongan Attitudes to the World', a landmark national study led by the Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI). This groundbreaking research provides an unprecedented look into how Tongans view foreign powers, international relations, and Tonga's place in an increasingly complex global landscape. The Tonga Poll examines public perceptions of influence from both long-standing regional partners and emerging global actors. It contributes to a growing body of Pacific research on international relations, complementing similar studies conducted in Samoa and across the region on the roles of China, Australia, New Zealand, and other external players.

Rooted in community engagement, the project has involved extensive data collection and dissemination workshops with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) throughout Tonga, including outreach in Vava'u and follow-up engagements in 2025. This approach ensures that the voices of Tongan communities remain central to the research and that findings are shared transparently and meaningfully. At the 2026 launch, attendees will hear directly from the TTI research leads as they present key insights from the survey reflecting on the challenges and opportunities of conducting a national study in Tonga.

- Reverend Dr 'Ungatea Kata, Director, Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI), Tonga
- Ms Heilala 'Atiola 'Ahio, Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI) Supervisor, Tonga Poll Survey; Program Manager, School of Business
- 'Ilaisaane Tau'atina Fonusa, Coordinator, TTI Research & Training Centre; Research Team Leader, Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI), Nuku'alofa, Tonga

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### ***The Power of Pacific Partnerships: Research, Capacity, and Policy Leadership***

Panel Convenor: Elizabeth Peak, Deputy Secretary and Head of the Office of the Pacific, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
Day 3: Thursday, 16 April 2026  
Time: 09.00 – 10.30

This panel brings together leading Pacific policymakers and practitioner-scholars in an in-conversation dialogue on how research can inform policy and practice across the region. Framed around 'The Power of Pacific Partnerships', the session explores current Pacific priorities and how collaborative research strengthens institutional capacity and policy innovation. Drawing on leadership experience at the Balance of Power (BOP), Pacific Community, and Tupou Tertiary Institute, panellists will reflect on how Pacific-led research shapes government thinking. Perspectives will include the role of regional evidence and policy advisory systems in supporting member states, the importance of culture, identity, and Pacific epistemologies in sustainable development, and how applied research, executive training, and graduating high-calibre students contribute directly to public sector capability. The discussion will highlight partnerships between governments, universities, and regional institutions as critical to generating relevant knowledge and building communities of practice. Initiatives such as BOP will be discussed as examples of research-informed leadership development that strengthens inclusive governance. Together, the panel advances a Pacific-led vision in which research, capacity-building, and policymaking are mutually reinforcing drivers of long-term regional resilience and transformation.

- Reverend Dr 'Ungatea Kata, Director, Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI), Tonga
- Associate Professor Frances Koya Vaka'uta, Team Leader Culture for Development, Pacific Community (SPC), Fiji
- Ms Jennifer Kalpokas Doan, Executive Director, Balance of Power, Vanuatu

## ***From Labour Mobility to Integration: Migration to, from, within the Pacific***

Panel Convenor: Associate Professor Ryan Edwards, Development Policy Centre, ANU  
Day 3: Thursday, 16 April 2026  
Time: 11.00 – 12.30

This panel explores the evolving dynamics of migration to, from, and within the Pacific through the lens of deepening integration and the barriers to achieving this. First, the panel examines undercurrents in migration policy discourses through two themes: (1) Australia and PNG's offshore detention of asylum seekers and regional resettlement of refugees, and (2) internal migration in PNG and mass displacement of urban settlement residents. Second, the panel reviews Pacific migration to Australia: current pathways, the shifting discourse, and policy tensions. Third, the panel evaluates new intra-regional mobility pilots, the dynamics of internal national migration, and how they fit within the broader mobility ecosystem, potential pathways and barriers to scale, and challenges shaping internal Pacific countries migration policy discourse. The panel aims to foster coherency and connection in these emerging disconnected but interrelated themes.

- *Forced Settlement and Displacement: (Dis)integration on the Margins of Migration Policy Discourse*  
Dr Nayahamui Rooney, School of Culture, History and Language, ANU
- *Pacific-Australia Migration: Where It's At, Where It's Going, and Navigating the Rough Currents To Get There*  
Associate Professor Ryan Edwards, Development Policy Centre, ANU
- *Intra-regional Mobility: From Pilots to Mainstreaming and Scale*  
Dr Alisi Holani, PACER Plus Implementation Unit (PPIU) and Dr Charlotte Bedford, Development Policy Centre, ANU

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## ***Making Headlines: Pacific Media, Information and Influence***

Panel Convenor: Associate Professor Anouk Ride, DPA, ANU  
Day 3: Thursday, 16 April 2026  
Time: 13.30 – 15.00

In the age of social media, we see a rise in disinformation and misinformation affecting many media audiences — so, what is the value of Pacific media in information, research, and influence over public debate? In this panel, Pacific media leaders reflect on their experiences and relevant research concerning how media can inform Pacific people and counter ignorance, polarisation, and disinformation. This panel also reflects on how researchers and the media can respond to these threats together and so create a better information environment and online experience for Pacific audiences.

- Stephen Dzedzic, Foreign Affairs (Asia Pacific) Reporter, Australian Broadcasting Corporation
- Belinda Kora, Secretary for the Media Council of PNG and Lead for Women in Media PNG
- Dr Prashanth Pillay, Manager, Research & Evaluation, Australian Broadcasting Corporation International Development

## *Oceanic Diplomacy Plenary Session and Book Launch*

Panel Convenor: Salā Dr George Carter, Fellow, DPA, ANU  
Day 3: Thursday, 16 April 2026  
Time: 15.30 – 17.00

### Special Panel and Book Launch – *Oceanic Diplomacy*

The Oceanic Diplomacy project explores systems of Indigenous and non-Western diplomacies in the Pacific region. The term 'Oceanic diplomacy' refers to the distinctive diplomatic practices and principles which come out of the long history and diverse cultures of Oceania, defined as including the Pacific Islands, Australia, and New Zealand. It highlights that these longstanding traditional systems are still important in the conduct of relations among tribes and clans within the postcolonial states of the Pacific, as well as working alongside Western diplomatic practices in the performance of modern diplomacy by Pacific Island states in the regional and global arena. This collaborative project brings together academics and practitioners from across the region to explore the value and significance of these practices in modern contexts within the state, between Pacific Island states, and in Pacific diplomacy in the global arena. It also examines the ethical and political issues involved in the state adapting and co-opting these Indigenous practices in contemporary diplomacy.

- H.E. Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa, Former Prime Minister of Samoa
- Salā Dr George Carter, Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU
- Associate Professor Gordon Nanau, Head of Pacific Studies and Deputy Head, School of Māori Studies & Pacific Studies at the University of Auckland, New Zealand

## 'B' Stream (Hedley Bull Lecture Theatre 1)

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### *Gender Reimagined: Pacific Perspectives Retold*

Panel Convenors: Associate Professor Anouk Ride, DPA, ANU and Dr Mercy Masta, Research Fellow, DPA, ANU  
Day 1: Tuesday, 14 April 2026  
Time: 10.30 – 12.00

Beyond the headline narratives of disadvantage and discrimination, Pacific women also own land, grow up with positive gender norms, play active roles in shaping relationships and values between men and women, and are founding figures in political and social movements. This panel brings together Pacific scholars to retell and reframe existing perspectives on gender — highlighting women's experiences in matrilineal societies, communities that demonstrate positive deviance from dominant gender norms, spaces that engage men, and forums that recognise women's critical roles in politics and society. It views gender as dynamic and evolving, urging the development sector and researchers to better engage with the diversity and transformation of Pacific gender relations.

- Dr Anita Togolo, Communities and Social Impact Specialist & PNG Country Manager, ERIAS Group
- Faye Siota, Deputy Director Inshore, Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR), Solomon Islands Government
- Anna Kwai, PhD Candidate, School of Culture, History and Language, ANU
- Dr Mercy Masta, Research Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU

## ***Responding to Corruption and Money Laundering in Papua New Guinea***

Panel Convenor: Michael Kabuni, PhD Candidate, DPA, ANU

Day 1: Tuesday, 14 April 2026

Time: 13.00 – 14.30

Following the 2024 Asia/Pacific Group (APG) report, PNG faces a high likelihood of grey listing in early 2026 due to persistent compliance and effectiveness gaps. Both the APG and national assessments identify corruption as a major predicate offence driving illicit financial flows. This panel brings together government, private sector, and civil society experts to discuss coordinated strategies for mitigating grey listing risks and expediting PNG's delisting through strengthened anti-corruption and Anti-Money Laundering, Counter-Terrorism Financing, and Counter-Proliferation Financing measures.

- Dr Eric Kwa, Secretary of Department of Justice and Attorney General, Papua New Guinea Government
- Dr Alma Sedler, Chief Technical Advisor (Anti-Corruption), United Nations Development Programme, Papua New Guinea
- Emmanuel Auru, Principal and Co-founder, KiVA Financial Crime Advisory Limited, Papua New Guinea
- Yuambari Haihuie, 2025 Australia Awards scholar, Master of Public Policy student, Crawford School of Public Policy, ANU

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## ***Connecting Peacebuilding Initiatives across Papua New Guinea***

Panel Convenors: Emeritus Professor Sinclair Dinnen, DPA, ANU and Professor Miranda Forsyth, School of Regulation and Global Governance, ANU

Day 1: Tuesday, 14 April 2026

Time: 15.00 – 16.30

Individual and communal violence continues to be a scourge in many parts of PNG, destroying lives, families, and entire communities and undermining social and economic development. While recognition of this problem typically leads to a 'law and order' response that is based on the use of force by state security actors, there is increasing recognition that a positive peace approach is also required; one that pays attention to proactively creating the conditions needed for communities to thrive. Indeed, the *National Prevention Strategy 2025–2030* sets out a vision to strengthen PNG's infrastructure for peace, emphasising restorative justice, conflict resolution, inclusive governance, and resilience-building as national priorities. But what does this look like in practice? What can be learnt from the decades of experience of the plethora of local peacebuilding initiatives that exist across the country? Do strategies that have worked in the past need to be adapted in the face of the new challenges created by the proliferation of guns, drugs, and corruption? This panel brings together researchers and speakers with lived experience to consider the underlying characteristics of successful peacebuilding initiatives and the conditions necessary to support, strengthen, and connect them.

- *Slow Peacebuilding to Prevent the Outbreak of Tribal Fighting Following Peace*  
Mr William Kipongi, Research Officer, Society and Culture Research Program, Papua New Guinea National Research Institute
- *The Circular Economy of Gun Buyback Schemes in the Papua New Guinea Highlands*  
Dr Michael Main, Research Affiliate, Initiative for Peacebuilding, School of Social and Political Studies, Faculty of Arts, The University of Melbourne
- *Peacebuilding Lessons from Jiwaka and Southern Highlands*  
Lilly Besoer, Founder and Executive Director, Voice for Change (VFC), Jiwaka Province, Papua New Guinea

## ***Risk and Resilience: Investigating and Promoting Personal and Community Safety***

Panel Convenor: Dr Judy Putt, Fellow, DPA, ANU

Panel Chair: Emeritus Professor Sinclair Dinnen, DPA, ANU

Day 2: Wednesday, 15 April 2026

Time: 09.00 – 10.30

High rates of crime, social disorder, and perceptions of lack of protection and safety can have a profound impact on individual and community wellbeing. At a structural level, they act as a potentially negative signal for — and hamper — political and social stability, economic development, and climate change mitigation. This panel draws on Pacific Research Program-funded research to examine the vulnerabilities and protective factors for women, children, and communities. The panellists will identify key risks and localised meanings of safety and social problems, as well as sources of support and intervention. To address and prevent crime victimisation and to foster peaceful communities, evidence based and collaborative approaches are required. The panellists will outline various options that they believe are essential in a rapidly changing, turbulent harmscape across the Pacific.

- *Safety on Stilts – Community and Gendered Precarity in a Fijian Settlement*  
Jasbant Kaur, Founder & Co-Lead Oceania Pride and ILGA Oceania Disability Subcommittee Chair
- *Children’s Risks and Resilience: Family, School, and Community Protection*  
Palu Ingram, PhD Candidate, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU
- *Perceptions and Management of Safety and Crime in Modern PNG Society and Role of the Church*  
Associate Professor Francis Essacu, Pro-Vice Chancellor – Planning Research & Development, Lutheran University of Papua New Guinea

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## ***Beyond Extraction: Indigenous and Relational Approaches to Melanesian Research***

Panel Convenors: Dr Mercy Masta, Research Fellow, DPA, ANU and Dr Theresa Meki, Pacific Research Fellow, DPA, ANU

Panel Chair: Dr Gemma Malungahu, Pacific Fellow, DPA, ANU

Day 2: Wednesday, 15 April 2026

Time: 11.00 – 12.30

Research in Melanesia presents unique ethical and personal challenges for Indigenous and emplaced researchers. These scholars navigate complex cultural, social, and political landscapes while maintaining reflexivity, legitimacy, and accountability to their communities. This panel brings together three perspectives from New Caledonia, Vanuatu, and PNG to explore relational and community-driven approaches to research. Panellists will discuss the ethical imperatives of continuous and collective consent, the responsibilities of reciprocity, and the navigation of *kastom*, gender, and insider positionality. Drawing on participatory and decolonial methodologies, the panel highlights how research can capture Indigenous ways of knowing and being while fostering solidarity and sustaining long-term relationships. The discussion also foregrounds the need for institutional reforms that better reflect Pacific epistemologies and relational worldviews. By embedding relational ethics, humility, and reciprocity throughout research processes, the panel aims to advance transformative practices that honour Indigenous agency and contribute meaningfully to community knowledge creation.

- Dr Anthony Tutugoro, Postdoctoral Researcher ANR Inclusive Peace and Temporary Lecturer, University of New Caledonia
- Anna Naupa, PhD Candidate, School of Culture, History and Language, ANU and Research Fellow, Pacific Security College, ANU
- Dr Theresa Meki, Pacific Research Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU
- Dr Mercy Masta, Research Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU

## *Partners for Peace: Lessons from and for Bougainville's Office of Missing Persons*

Panel Convenor: Dr David Oakeshott, Fellow, DPA, ANU

Day 2: Wednesday, 15 April 2026

Time: 13.30 – 15.00

Few issues demand more careful and genuine partnership between international actors and Pacific counterparts than the recovery of loved ones lost during civil war. This panel draws on recent developments in Bougainville, where the Office of Missing Persons has grappled with how to integrate forensic DNA-led methods for finding missing persons with Melanesian customary practices and rituals. It places these local practices in conversation with international experiences and Bougainville's own traditions and history of peacemaking.

- *Responses to Missing Persons and Peacebuilding in Global Perspective: Forensics and Beyond*  
Associate Professor Lia Kent, Vice Chancellor's Principal Research and Impact Fellow, Victoria University and Dr Simon Robins, Consultant/Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Applied Human Rights, University of York (co-authors; Associate Professor Kent will present for both)
  - *Reconciliation and Public Remembrance of Missing Persons in Bougainville*  
Dr David Oakeshott, Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU
  - *Indigenous Approaches to Peace and Missing Persons: Research Findings*  
Dr Mercy Masta, Research Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU
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## **Starlink's Arrival and Changes to Communication Access in the Pacific**

Panel Convenor: Dr Amanda H A Watson, Fellow, DPA, ANU

Day 3: Thursday, 16 April 2026

Time: 11.00 – 12.30

Along with undersea cables, satellites constitute key infrastructure that can enable access to the internet and telecommunications. In recent years, the Starlink satellite internet service has become available in the Pacific, although some countries have withheld operator licences. This timely panel will showcase collaborative research funded primarily through the Pacific Research Program that has examined access to Starlink, regulation of Starlink, and perceptions of it in Pacific countries.

- *Communication Satellite Access in the Pacific*  
Dr Atishnal Elvin Chand, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of New South Wales (UNSW) Canberra
  - *Starlink's Entry into Samoa*  
Ms Polataivao Fiafaitupe Tuiloma Lafaele, Lecturer/Instructor, National University of Samoa
  - *Tongan Views on Satellite Technologies*  
Dr Aleksandar Deejay
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# Biographies

## **Heilala 'Atiola 'Aho**

*Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI) Supervisor, Tonga Poll Survey; Program Manager, School of Business*

Ms Heilala 'Atiola 'Aho is the Program Manager for the School of Business at Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI), where she oversees academic programs and contributes to the development of business education in Tonga. She holds a Master of Commerce with a major in Professional Accounting. Ms 'Aho has been a lecturer at TTI since completing her first degree and has dedicated her career to supporting the academic and professional development of tertiary students. She is committed to providing accessible, high-quality education for learners who may not have the opportunity to study overseas, ensuring they can obtain recognised qualifications within Tonga at an affordable cost. Her leadership is grounded in a belief in education as a transformative pathway. Through her teaching and program management, she strives to prepare students for meaningful participation in the workforce and to inspire confidence as they transition into their professional lives.

## **Margaret Aila**

*Bay Women's Skills Centre, Papua New Guinea*

Margaret Aila is an experienced and dedicated leader in Papua New Guinea's NGO sector. She represents the Advancing PNG: Women Leaders Network (APNGWLN) and is the Provincial Facilitator for Milne Bay Provincial Hub in Alotau. She is also the Founder and Director of the Bay Women's Skills Centre, which helps women and girls in rural communities gain skills and opportunities. In 2025, she led the LLG Election Observations in Milne Bay Province. Margaret served two terms on the APNGWLN Board and remains an active member. From 2017 to 2020, she managed the PNG Women's Business Resource Center, Port Moresby. She has also held leadership roles with the PNG Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Business and Professional Women's Club of Port Moresby and the Port Moresby Cancer Relief Center. In 2007, she contested the general elections in Esa'ala Electorate, Milne Bay Province, placing fifth among eighteen candidates.

## **Fuimaono Dylan Asafo**

*University of Auckland & PhD Candidate, University of Melbourne*

Fuimaono Dylan Asafo is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Law at the University of Auckland and PhD Candidate at the University of Melbourne Law School. He is of Samoan descent and was born in Naarm on Wurundjeri land and raised in Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa.

## **Emmanuel Auru**

*KiVA Financial Crime Advisory Limited, Papua New Guinea*

Emmanuel Auru is the Principal and Co-founder of PNG's first financial crime advisory company, KiVA Financial Crime Advisory Limited. He is a legal and governance leader with more than 16 years of experience advising organisations in PNG. He holds a Bachelor of Laws from the University of PNG and a Masters in Competition and Consumer Law from the University of Melbourne. He has served as Head of Legal and Company Secretary for Westpac in PNG and as Group Legal Counsel for ASX-listed PNG conglomerate, Steamships Trading Company Limited. His expertise spans competition law advisory, banking and finance, regulatory compliance, mergers and acquisitions (M&A), economic regulation, corporate governance, and financial crime legal frameworks. Emmanuel has advised on cross border M&As, regulatory obligations, guided responses to supervisory actions, supported the design and delivery of compliance programs, and managed legal claims and disputes arising from competition law and financial crime matters.

**Kesaya Baba**

*COP31 Strategy and Partnerships, WWF-Australia*

Kesaya is the Senior Manager for COP31 Strategy and Partnerships for WWF-Australia. She is Fijian and Australian (of Celtic heritage) and a climate and human rights advocate with experience in climate diplomacy and international development in the Pacific and Southeast Asia. Kesaya was previously the COP26 Climate Change Attaché at the British Embassy in Bangkok, where she coordinated the UK's climate diplomacy in Thailand leading up to the 2021 UN climate conference. Back in Australia, she is now focused on building community and momentum among non-state actors in preparation for COP31, with justice and intersectionality at the core.

**Charlotte Bedford**

*Development Policy Centre, ANU*

Dr Charlotte Bedford is a Research Fellow at the Development Policy Centre, ANU, working in the field of Pacific labour mobility. Since 2007 Charlotte has been closely involved in the New Zealand Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme that formed the basis of her doctoral studies at the University of Adelaide. Charlotte continues to have a strong interest in the New Zealand and Australian seasonal work schemes as well as working on broader social, economic, and demographic aspects of Pacific labour mobility.

**Lilly Besoer**

*Voice for Change (VFC), Jiwaka Province, Papua New Guinea*

Lilly Besoer is from Jiwaka Province. She is a women's rights activist and advocate for the political, economic, and social empowerment of women. She is the Founder and Executive Director of a non-government organisation, Voice for Change, focusing on advocacy for gender equality and building alliances to end all forms of violence against women and girls. She is the Chairperson of the Highlands Regional Human Rights Defenders Movement Network, a part of their newly established regional network of Women Human Rights Defenders and connected with the Pacific network of women working against violence against women. Lilly is an Advisor to the Asia Pacific Urgent Action Fund. She is engaged in a number of committees, including the PNG National Committee on Ending Violence against Women, Jiwaka Provincial Village Court Services, and Jiwaka Provincial Peace Mediation Group, and is Deputy Chair to the Jiwaka Provincial Gender Based Violence and Sorcery Accusation Related Violence. She often leads facilitation of conflict resolution and peace mediation among parties in past and present internal tribal conflicts and wars. In 2010, Lilly was awarded a Pacific Human Rights Defenders Award and shared this recognition with her family and organisation. The experiences of both her personal life and activism work have helped her to connect with women in similar circumstances. She is inspired by people giving her the opportunity to try to help them. People look up to her for advice and guidance which she can offer. The best part of her life and activism work are her six children who have given her the opportunity to be a mum and played a vital role in the growth of Voice for Change.

**Alison Carrington**

*Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*

Alison Carrington is a senior career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). She currently serves as Assistant Secretary, Integration and Education Branch in DFAT's Office of the Pacific. Her career has focused on Australia's relations with the Pacific and with Europe. She also has extensive experience in international climate change policy and negotiations. Overseas, Alison has served as Australian Consul-General in New Caledonia (2019 – 2021) and Third Secretary at the Australian Embassy in Berlin (2003 – 2006). Outside of DFAT, she has previously worked at CSIRO and the Department of Climate Change. She holds a Bachelor of Laws (Hons) and Bachelor of Arts (European Studies) from the University of Queensland.

**George Carter**

*Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU*

Dr George Carter is the Interim Head of the Department of Pacific Affairs at the ANU, Director of the ANU Pacific Institute, and Cluster Lead on Climate Security and Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge at the ANU Institute for Climate Change, Energy and Disaster. He is a Leading Expert with the UN Independent Expert Group on the Multidimensional Vulnerability

Index. George's research examines the intersection of international politics and security with climate change, focusing on diplomacy, finance, gender, democracy, and knowledge, and the power and authority of Pacific states and Small Island Developing States. His work contributes to climate politics, foreign policy, multilateralism, Oceanic diplomacy, Pacific regionalism, geopolitics, and Indigenous philosophy and Pacific aerospace politics. He teaches and supervises across international relations, security, development, and Pacific studies, and delivers executive education for diplomatic, defence, and public institutions. Grounded in the principle of *tautua* (service), his work supports Pacific communities, regional organisations, and climate and ocean negotiations. George is from Samoa, holds the chiefly title Salā, and draws on his Samoan, Tuvaluan, i-Kiribati, Chinese, and British heritage.

### **Atishnal Elvin Chand**

*University of New South Wales, Canberra*

Dr Atishnal Elvin Chand is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of New South Wales, Canberra, where he completed his PhD in Aerospace Engineering, specialising in space weather. Dr Chand's research interests include the modelling of the near-Earth space environment, the impact of space weather on the upper atmosphere, high-latitude electrodynamics, uncertainty quantification, and global sensitivity analysis of atmospheric models. Dr Chand has expertise in advanced atmospheric modelling, computational and numerical methods, and the physical processes governing space weather phenomena. Dr Chand has hands-on experience in Vanuatu, Fiji, and Australia and is committed to leveraging satellite-based technologies to address real-world challenges across the Pacific and Australian space sector. He is currently working on improving physics-based atmospheric models to enhance space weather prediction and forecasting capabilities.

### **Virginia Comolli**

*Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime & Visiting Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU*

Virginia is a Visiting Fellow at ANU's Department of Pacific Affairs and is the Head of the Pacific Programme at the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), where she leads research, analysis, and engagement with stakeholders across Oceania. She joined the GI-TOC in 2020, initially managing research on environmental crime and illicit financial flows, and later served as Senior Expert in the Asia-Pacific Observatory, conducting work on issues including child sexual exploitation and abuse, and supporting the organisation's expansion into the Pacific. Prior to GI-TOC, Virginia spent 14 years at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, most recently as Senior Fellow and Head of the Conflict, Security and Development program, focusing on organised crime, violent extremism, conflict, and insurgency. Her earlier experience includes a secondment to the UK Ministry of Justice, work with a private security firm's intelligence unit, and service as a Special Police Constable.

### **The Honourable Pat Conroy MP**

*Australian Government*

Pat Conroy studied economics at the University of Sydney, graduating with honours in 2000. While studying, he worked part-time as an electorate officer for the Hon. Anthony Albanese. After university, he worked as an industrial and policy organiser for the forestry division of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and then as a policy adviser to Senator George Campbell. Mr Conroy was the national economist for the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union from 2004 to 2008. From 2008 to 2013 he was Principal Policy Adviser and Deputy Chief of Staff to the Hon. Greg Combet, AM, MP, who served as a Minister in the Rudd and Gillard Labor Governments. In these roles he worked in developing significant policies in areas as diverse as defence procurement, climate change and energy, and industry and innovation. He was elected to the House of Representatives as the Member for Charlton in 2013 and, following an electoral redistribution, as the Member for Shortland in 2016 and again in 2019 and 2022. His Parliamentary service has included Deputy Chair (Senior Opposition member) on the Joint Public Accounts and Audit Committee, Deputy Chair of the House Environment and Energy Committee, Deputy Chair of the House Privileges Committee and as a member of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics. From 2016 to 2019 Mr Conroy was Shadow Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy and Shadow Assistant Minister for Infrastructure. In 2019 he was appointed Shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Shadow Minister Assisting for Defence and Shadow Minister Assisting for Climate Change and Energy. Following the election of the Albanese Labor Government in May 2022, he

was appointed as Minister for International Development and the Pacific and Minister for Defence Industry. In July 2024 he was promoted to Cabinet and appointed Minister for International Development and the Pacific and Minister for Defence Industry and Capability Delivery.

### **Aleksandar Deejay**

Dr Aleksandar Deejay is the former Executive Director of the Australasian Centre for Space Governance and Research Fellow at ANU's School of Regulation and Global Governance. His research is on community perspectives on, and impacts of, emerging technology use and governance.

### **Sinclair Dinnen**

*Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU*

Emeritus Professor Sinclair Dinnen has a background in socio-legal studies and completed his PhD at ANU in 1996. His doctoral research was undertaken in PNG while he was a Research Fellow at the National Research Institute (1992 – 1995). This research was published as *Law and Order in a Weak State: Crime and Politics in Papua New Guinea* (University of Hawaii Press, 2001). He has longstanding research interests in regulatory pluralism, comparative criminology, justice and policing, conflict and peacebuilding, post-colonial state formation, and development studies. Sinclair has published in leading journals including *Oceania, Contemporary Pacific, Third World Quarterly, Policing & Society, Conflict, Security & Development, International Peacekeeping, Australian Journal of International Affairs, Development and Change*, and *Third World Thematics*, as well as book chapters, and has also co-edited seven books including, most recently, *Hybridity on the Ground In Peacebuilding and Development* (ANU Press, 2018).

### **Jennifer Kalpokas Doan**

*Balance of Power (BOP), Vanuatu*

Jennifer Kalpokas Doan is one of two Executive Directors for the Balance of Power (BOP) initiative in the Pacific, working across Fiji, Tonga, and Vanuatu and at the regional level. BOP is a long-term initiative that aims to initiate dialogue and action to influence social norms and greater acceptance of women's roles and legitimacy in decision making and leadership in the Pacific region, with a particular focus on political leadership. Based in Vanuatu, Jennifer has over 19 years' experience working in development, with a passion for greater inclusivity in governance and leadership in the Pacific. Jennifer began her career as a high school teacher in 2003 before moving to the public service to work in the Ministry of Trade as a Principal Training Officer in the Department of Cooperatives. She later worked for AusAID and then the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Port Vila as a Senior Program Manager for its Governance for Growth program from 2008 to 2019, before moving to her current role. Jennifer is the current Chairperson on the local board of Bank South Pacific, Vanuatu Ltd., where she is serving her third three-year term. She also serves on the board of the Vanuatu Financial Services Commission, and is a board member on the National Insurance Services (Vanuatu) Ltd. She has also held various roles in community level organisations for her church and village. Jennifer holds a Bachelor degree in Political Science and International Relations from the University of Hawaii, and a Master of Public Administration from the ANU.

### **Stephen Dziedzic**

*Australian Broadcasting Corporation*

Stephen Dziedzic is the ABC's Foreign Affairs (Asia Pacific) Reporter, based in the Parliament House bureau. He covers foreign policy and Australia's relationship with countries in the Asia Pacific region. Stephen has worked for the ABC since 2007 and spent five years covering federal politics.

### **Ryan Edwards**

*Development Policy Centre, ANU*

Dr Ryan Edwards is an Associate Professor of Economics and the Deputy Director of the Development Policy Centre at the Crawford School of Public Policy, ANU. His research lies at the intersection of labour economics, international trade, and the environment. Prior to this role, he held academic appointments at Stanford University and Dartmouth College in the US, and various positions in the Australian Government. He holds a PhD in Economics from the ANU.

### **Francis Essacu**

*Lutheran University of Papua New Guinea*

Francis Essacu is an Associate Professor and currently serves as Pro Vice Chancellor — Planning, Research & Development, and Head of Higher Degree Research & Postgraduate Studies at the Lutheran University of Papua New Guinea. He previously held senior leadership positions at the Papua New Guinea University of Natural Resources and Environment, including Pro Vice Chancellor — Policy, Planning & Development, Head of the Department of Sustainable Forestry, and Senior Lecturer. He has also served as a Lecturer in Development Sociology at the Papua New Guinea University of Technology. He has over 25 years of experience across the public and private sectors, with expertise in community and stakeholder engagement, conflict resolution, sustainable development, forestry, climate change, disaster risk reduction, strategic planning, development leadership, and law and justice. He holds a PhD in Environment and Natural Resource Management from the ANU, along with postgraduate qualifications in leadership, management, and conflict resolution.

### **'Ilaisaane Tau'atina Fonua**

*Coordinator, TTI Research & Training Centre; Research Team Leader, Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI), Nuku'alofa, Tonga*

Ms 'Ilaisaane Tau'atina Fonua serves as the Coordinator of the Research & Training Centre at Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI), where she leads research activities and training initiatives within the institute. Her role includes coordinating national surveys and research projects, organising enumerator training, and supporting collaborative work with international partners, including those from Australia. The Research & Training Centre functions as TTI's dedicated unit for research and capacity-building, with a strong commitment to community-engaged and locally led research practices. She is a co-author of a developmental psychology study examining children's social reasoning about individual agentive and deontic concerns. The research demonstrated that Tongan children were highly attuned to social norms governing behaviour and used this understanding to predict actions in socially normative contexts. The study highlights the influence of cultural expectations on children's social reasoning. She continues to contribute to TTI's expanding research portfolio and is committed to strengthening research capacity in Tonga through culturally grounded, community-centred approaches. Ms Fonua has a strong passion for research and training, and her growing academic portfolio reflects her commitment to advancing knowledge in Tonga.

### **Denise Fisher**

*Department of Pacific Affairs & Centre for European Studies, ANU*

Denise Fisher, currently Visiting Fellow at the Department of Pacific Affairs and the Centre for European Studies at the ANU, is a former senior Australian diplomat. She has served as Australian High Commissioner (Ambassador) in Harare (accredited to Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia); and Australian Consul-General in Noumea, covering New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis and Futuna, and Australian delegate to the South Pacific Community. An experienced strategic, political and economic analyst, she has held diplomatic posts in Africa, India, and Malaysia and served as Political Counsellor at the Australian Embassy in Washington. Denise writes on France in the Pacific and Indo Pacific. ANU Press published her book *France in the South Pacific* in 2013. She regularly comments to Australian and international media, particularly on developments in New Caledonia.

### **Miranda Forsyth**

*School of Regulation and Global Governance, ANU*

Miranda Forsyth is a Professor in the School of Regulation and Global Governance in the College of Law, Governance, and Policy at ANU. Her geographical focus has been primarily in the Pacific Islands region, particularly Vanuatu and PNG. Her current research projects focus on the Pacific and include the potential of Restorative Justice for the Pacific Islands region, particularly in relation to gender based violence; the promise and challenges of Community Rule-Making as regulatory innovation; and a multi-year project on overcoming sorcery accusation related violence in PNG. She holds an ARC Future Fellowship on 'Overcoming Violence and Building Peace in Conditions of Complexity in Papua New Guinea'. Miranda is the author of *A Bird that Flies with Two Wings: Kastom and State Justice Systems in Vanuatu* (ANU ePress, 2009) and co-author of *Weaving Intellectual Property Policy in Small island Developing States* (Intersentia, 2015).

### **Yuambari Haihuie**

*Master of Public Policy student, Crawford School of Public Policy, ANU*

Yuambari Haihuie is a 2025 Australia Awards scholar studying a Master of Public Policy in the Crawford School of Public Policy at the ANU. Previously, he was the Pacific Regional Advocacy and Engagement Lead for Transparency International, and was Deputy Director – Partnerships and Policy at Transparency International Papua New Guinea. He holds a BSc. (Hons) from Queen Mary University of London, UK, and in 2023 was an inaugural Resilient Pacific Islands Leaders Fellow with the East-West Center at the University of Hawaii.

### **Nicole Haley**

*Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU*

Nicole Haley is Professor of Anthropology and Pacific Politics at the ANU and currently serves as an election reform advisor in PNG's Department of Prime Minister and National Executive Council. Founding Head of the ANU Department of Pacific Affairs, she brings 17 years of academic leadership, including 14 as Head of Department and eight leading the consortium-based Pacific Research Program. An internationally recognised authority on elections, governance, and development in Melanesia, she has produced more than 100 research outputs, including two co-edited books, 40 peer-reviewed articles, major reports, and election handbooks. Widely awarded, she is known for methodological innovation, advancing women's leadership, and translating research into impactful public policy and reform initiatives.

### **Nicholas Hoare**

*Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU*

Nicholas Hoare is a Pacific History Research Fellow at the Department of Pacific Affairs. He has research interests in the colonial history of the Francophone Pacific and historical biography. He is co-editor of the Narratives and Documents section of the *Journal of Pacific History* and is co-editing a special issue of *Labour History: A Journal of Labour and Social History* (with Tobias Wagemann) titled 'Island Labour: Between Oceanic Mobility and Coercive Regimes'. In 2025, he helped revive the *PNG Dictionary of Biography* with colleagues at UPNG and ANU and is now working on Volume Two.

### **Alisi Kautoke Holani**

*PACER Plus Implementation Unit*

Dr Alisi Kautoke Holani is the Labour Mobility Specialist, Trade in Services and Investment Adviser at the PACER Plus Implementation Unit (PPIU). In her current role, she leads the regional work programmes for Labour Mobility, Trade in Services, Movement of Natural Persons and Investment under the PACER Plus Agreement. Before this role, she served for over 13 years as Deputy Chief Executive Officer at the Tonga Ministry of Trade and Economic Development, where she led work on trade policy, private sector development, and investment policy.

### **Stephen Howes**

*Crawford School of Public Policy, ANU*

Stephen Howes is a Professor of Economics at the Crawford School of Public Policy, ANU. He is the Director of the Development Policy Centre. He has been working on issues relating to Pacific migration since 2005.

### **Barbara Ibuai**

*Climate Collective Zenadth Kes Torres Strait Islands AUSTRALIA*

Barbara Ibuai, is of the Saibai Koedal Clan, Saibai Island, Zenadth Kes (Torres Strait). She is Founder and Principal of Climate Collective Zenadth Kes (CCZK). Through CCZK, Barbara leads an Indigenous-designed, Indigenous-led climate initiative advancing community leadership, climate-resilient living, protection of Country and advocacy for Torres Strait Islanders experiencing climate harm on the frontline. She sees CCZK as a much-needed Torres Strait born Climate Organisation, first of its kind. She is also a co-founder of Strait Arrow Films, integrating creative practice with cultural authority and climate advocacy. Raised on remote Saibai Island, Barbara has maintained a strong connection to her community, culture and Country, and is a fluent speaker of her endangered Kalaw Kawaw Ya mother tongue. Her cultural knowledge deeply shapes her community climate work, as does the inspiration and wisdom of her elders,

including Uncles Pabai & Kabai (Australian Climate Case) and Torres Strait Climate Advocate Aunty Dr McRose Elu.

### **Palu Ingram**

*PhD Candidate, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU*

Palu Ingram is a PhD candidate with the Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU. Palu began her professional career in 2007, gaining several qualifications and practical experience across the children's services, early childhood education, and care sectors. Palu has a particular interest in child development, children's wellbeing, and child safety. Palu's thesis explores childhood development delays and welfare concerns in PNG.

### **Michael Kabuni**

*PhD Candidate, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU & the University of Papua New Guinea*

Michael Kabuni is a PhD Candidate at the Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU. He is also a Lecturer in the Political Science Department of the University of Papua New Guinea.

### **Romitesh Kant**

*Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU*

Romitesh Kant is a Research Fellow with the Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU and an Adjunct Research Fellow with The Centre for Human Security and Social Change at La Trobe University. Romitesh's PhD research examined the symbiotic relationship between politics and masculinity/ies in the Fijian national context.

### **Rev. Dr 'Ungatea Fonua Kata**

*Director, Tupou Tertiary Institute*

Rev. Dr 'Ungatea Fonua Kata is the Director of Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI), one of the Kingdom of Tonga's leading tertiary institutions operating under the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Education System. She also oversees TTI's Research and Training Centre, a unit dedicated to community engaged research and collaborative partnerships with local Tongan communities, civil society organisations, and international partners. Her leadership champions locally led, culturally grounded research approaches that generate meaningful and contextually relevant knowledge for Tonga. Dr Kata has served as an educator for nearly four decades, specialising in English and literacy education. In addition to her academic leadership, Dr Kata is an active member of several civil society organisations, particularly those advocating for human rights and the increased participation of women in leadership across the Pacific. Dr Kata is also a passionate advocate for ocean protection, actively opposing deep sea mining and other extractive activities that threaten Tonga's environment. In 2024, Dr Kata led the national research team responsible for the landmark study 'Understanding Tongan Attitudes to the World', which provided critical insights into how Tongans perceive global issues and contributed to shaping national dialogue and policy considerations. She also served as part of the Balance of Power research team that led to a report on 'Voters' Perceptions of Women as Leaders in Tonga', a project committed to elevating young women and girls in leadership spaces and strengthening collaboration with stakeholders dedicated to women's empowerment.

### **Jasbant Kaur**

*Oceania Pride and ILGA Oceania Disability, Fiji*

Jasbant Kaur is a feminist researcher, educator, and social justice advocate based in Fiji, whose work centres on gender equity, disability, and social inclusion. Jasbant is founder and co-lead of Oceania Pride, advancing LGBTIQ+ rights and intersectional inclusion across Fiji and the Pacific. An early-career researcher, Jasbant works on projects explore queer community safety, intersecting religious and queer identities, and the politics of othering and belonging with an intersectional lens. Her research explores the nuanced layers of gender, visibility, and erasure within the Indo-Fijian queer community, contributing valuable insights into the lived realities of Indo-Fijian LGBTIQ people who are not often the focus of research. Recipient of the Pacific Scholarship for Excellence in Research & Innovation award, Jasbant's work bridges academic inquiry, policy advocacy, and community leadership. Beyond academic pursuits, Jasbant finds inspiration and reflection through writing poetry and delving into autobiographies and memoirs.

## **Sarah Kende**

*Advancing PNG: Women Leaders Network*

Sarah Kende is from Papua New Guinea and a community development professional working through women leaders leading change in their respective communities on community development fronts, including women in political participation. She currently works as the Project Lead for Advancing PNG Women Leaders Network. She led a team of domestic observers in the 2022 National General Election in targeted provinces of PNG and recently did so in the 2025 Local Level Government Elections by utilising the ANU-DPA Election observation methodology. The approach is vital for the organisation in leveraging a strategy towards normalising women's participation from the local to sub national level. With over 20 years' work experience, especially in the NGO and private sector, she has also been involved in voluntary work with several community-based organisations. Sarah holds a Bachelors degree in Agriculture and Rural Development from UOT and has been involved in research work. In her free time, she likes to advise young people on confidence building.

## **Lia Kent**

*Victoria University*

Lia is a peace and conflict studies scholar with an interest in the myriad ways in which communities make sense of legacies of state violence, and large-scale conflict. She has conducted empirical and ethnographic research in Timor-Leste for over twenty years, and more recently has worked in Sri Lanka and Aceh (Indonesia). Her recent work, funded by an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship (2021–2025) focuses on local responses to conflict-related missing persons and peacebuilding. Lia is the author of two books, *The Dynamics of Transitional Justice: International Models and Local Realities in East Timor* (Routledge, 2012) and *The Unruly Dead: Spirits, Memory, and State Formation in Timor-Leste* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2024). She has also published widely in journals including *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, *Memory Studies*, *Death Studies*, and the *International Feminist Journal of Politics*.

## **William Kipongi**

*Papua New Guinea National Research Institute*

William Kipongi is a Research Officer with the Culture and Society Research Program at the Papua New Guinea National Research Institute. He has carried out extensive studies on sorcery accusation related violence (SARV) in PNG and tribal fighting in the highlands. He has published widely on SARV and co-authored a number of journal articles and discussion papers with colleagues from ANU, Divine Word University (DWU) and NRI (published by NRI, ANU Department of Pacific Affairs, DevPol, and others). He is a member of the National Advisory Committee to the National GBV Secretariat, board member of the Sorcery National Action Plan, and a member of the International Network Against Witchcraft Accusations and Ritual Attacks. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Sciences and Religious Studies from DWU, and a Diploma in Philosophy from the Catholic Theological Institute in Bomana, PNG.

## **Belinda Kora**

*PNG Media Council and Women in Media PNG*

Belinda Kora is a passionate Papua New Guinean journalist, who graduated from Divine Word University before beginning her career in journalism in the early 2000s. She has been head of news at two of the country's well known commercial radio stations before moving on to setting up the newsroom for the short lived PNGTV. In 2017, Belinda was elected as the Secretary of the Media Council of Papua New Guinea, a position she still holds. In 2023, she initiated the country's first ever Women in Media PNG initiative, which is set to launch mid this year. She works full time with the ABC's Pacific Team, based at the ABC Bureau in Port Moresby. She joined the ABC in 2018 and has since contributed to stories and content from PNG to the rest of the world via the ABC platform.

## **Eric Kwa**

*Department of Justice and Attorney General, Papua New Guinea Government*

Dr Eric Kwa is a prominent Papua New Guinean legal scholar, a public servant, and an environmental law specialist. He currently serves as Secretary for the Department of Justice and Attorney General, where his leadership plays a key role in contributing to legal reforms, administration of justice services, and public service governance in PNG. Dr Kwa previously

served as Secretary of the Constitutional and Law Reform Commission (2011–2018) and has also held academic leadership roles at the University of Papua New Guinea, including Associate Professor and Dean of the Law School. He holds a PhD in Environmental Law from the University of Auckland, an LLM from the University of Wollongong and an LLB from the University of Papua New Guinea. Dr Kwa has written 13 books, including the milestone *Kwa's Legal Dictionary* (110 Ltd, 2018), the first of its kind in PNG and the South Pacific region. His scholarly contributions also include research papers, book chapters, and conference presentations that have been presented and published locally and internationally.

### **Anna Kwai**

*PhD Candidate, School of Culture, History and Language, ANU*

Annie Kwai is a doctoral researcher in the School of Culture, History and Language at the ANU, where she has recently submitted her PhD thesis. Her research draws on Indigenous Kwara'ae epistemologies and ontologies to culturally situate gender relations and to analyse their historical transformations through engagements with agents of modernity, including colonisation, Christianity, and capitalism. She holds a Master of Arts in History from the ANU and a Bachelor of Environmental Studies from the University of the South Pacific, Fiji. She has taught Pacific History and Politics at the University of the South Pacific and the Pacific Adventist University (History) and is the author of *Solomon Islanders in WWII: An Indigenous Perspective* (ANU Press, 2017).

### **Polataivao Fiafaitupe Tuiloma-Lafaele**

*National University of Samoa*

Polataivao Fiafaitupe Tuiloma-Lafaele is a Lecturer in the Department of Information Technology and Systems at the National University of Samoa and a certified Cisco/CEIT instructor. With over a decade of experience in technology education, she has contributed to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) research, cybersecurity curriculum development, and initiatives in digital literacy and the integration of artificial intelligence. Her academic interests include networking and security, internet governance, connectivity, and the integration of ICT across education and healthcare systems. She has been actively involved in capacity building through workshops, curriculum innovation, and applied research, advancing digital transformation in Samoa. Her current research focuses on the arrival of Starlink and its potential to transform connectivity, digital inclusion, and ICT policy in Samoa.

### **Michael Main**

*The University of Melbourne*

Michael Main has a PhD in anthropology from the ANU. Michael's doctoral research focused on the Huli-speaking population of Hela Province in the Papua New Guinea (PNG) highlands, with a particular focus on inter-group armed conflict and the social impact of the PNG LNG Project. Michael has a professional background in geology and environmental science, which has provided the basis for his interest in the anthropology of development and resource extraction, and associated social instability. Michael's expertise has been utilised by various organisations including Jubilee Australia, Conciliation Resources, the NSW Environmental Defenders Office, and the United States Institute of Peace. Michael maintains a close working relationship with his Papua New Guinean colleagues and their peacebuilding work in Hela Province.

### **Gemma Malungahu**

*Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU*

Dr Gemma Malungahu is a pracademic within the Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU whose work is grounded in Pacific philosophies and epistemologies, with a strong commitment to Pacific ethical values and relational worldviews. Her doctoral research examined the relationship between housing systems and the health and wellbeing of Pacific peoples, drawing on the *tā-vā* (time-space) philosophy and the dialogic method of *tālānga* to engage respectfully with knowledge holders. Her recent research on cultural security supports the safeguarding of Tongan cultural and linguistic heritage in ways that honour the depth, dignity, and continuity of Tongan knowledge systems, contributing to policy efforts that uphold cultural practice as a living expression of identity and collective wellbeing. As co-convenor of the Pacific Research Colloquium (2022–2025), she led the development of the Pacific Research Methodologies course, now a core component of the Master of Pacific Studies. Her research interests include Pacific Indigenous knowledge systems, public health, and the social sciences, with a sustained

focus on culturally grounded, community-responsive research that informs policy, Pacific leadership, and practice.

### **Mercy Masta**

*Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU*

Dr Mercy Masta is a Research Fellow with the Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU. Her research focuses on the intersections of gender, masculinity, development, and Indigenous peacebuilding in the Pacific. She holds a Masters degree in Development and Gender Studies from the University of Melbourne and a PhD from RMIT University on Pacific masculinities and engaging men in ending violence. Dr Masta has experience working on gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) and peacebuilding initiatives across the Pacific region. Her work is grounded in Pacific contexts and prioritises culturally informed, ethical, and community-led research approaches. Through her research, she contributes to critical conversations on gender, peacebuilding, and development while advancing Pacific perspectives in academic and policy spaces.

### **Theresa Meki**

*Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU*

Dr Theresa Meki is a Pacific Research Fellow with the Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU. Her PhD thesis, "*Givim lo Aza*" (Give it to the mother): Oro Women in the 2017 Papua New Guinea National Elections' is a political ethnography that examined the how women campaigned and garnered voter support in the leadup to the 2017 PNG national. In the last seven years, Theresa has worked on various DFAT-funded DPA projects such as the Women in Leadership Support program (WLSP), Joint District Assessment and Political Context Analysis in PNG and she worked as a team leader (Oro Province) for two PNG National Election Domestic Observations (2017 and 2022). Prior to joining DPA (then SSGM) in 2015 as a post-graduate candidate, Theresa worked on the *Pawa Meri* documentary film series as a field producer and research assistant. More recently, Theresa has taken an interest in biography writing. She is currently the co-convenor of the *PNG Dictionary of Biography* project.

### **Rebecca Monson**

*Law School, ANU*

Rebecca Monson's research, teaching, and policy work focus on social inequality, natural resource governance, emergency management, and justice systems in Australia and the Pacific. Her scholarship draws on law and development, transnational feminisms, legal geography, political ecology, and Pacific Studies. She has produced some of the earliest empirical research on climate displacement and relocation in the Pacific and led the drafting of Solomon Islands' first climate relocation guidelines in 2022. Her book *Gender, Property and Politics in the Pacific: Who Speaks for Land?* (Cambridge University Press, 2023), which won the 2023 Australian Legal Research Award for a book, examines the connections between local property disputes, state formation, and gendered political participation. She currently holds an Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Research Award examining how Pacific women's movements mobilise around natural resource rights. Rebecca regularly advises donors, governments, and international organisations on customary justice systems, resource governance, climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and rule of law. She has collaborated with organisations including the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, International Development Law Organisation, and International Organization for Migration. She is a member of the ANU Pacific Institute board and the Australian Association for Pacific Studies.

### **Gordon Nanau**

*University of Auckland*

Dr Gordon Nanau is Associate Professor, Head of Pacific Studies and Deputy Head, School of Māori Studies & Pacific Studies at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. He currently assists in the teaching of undergraduate and postgraduate courses at the University of Auckland. He is a keen observer of the impacts of globalisation on local communities in the Pacific, with strong research interests in the political economy of development projects, rural livelihoods, political leadership, and public sector reforms. His other research interests include elections, democracy, sustainable development initiatives, and Pacific epistemologies. Dr Nanau hails from Tathimboko on Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands.

### **His Excellency Will Nankervis**

*Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*

Mr Nankervis is a senior career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and is also First Assistant Secretary, Climate Diplomacy and Development Finance Division. He has previously served overseas as Ambassador of Australia to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Jakarta, and had earlier postings to the Australian Permanent Mission to the United Nations, New York and Australian High Commission, Colombo.

### **Jimmy Naouna**

Jimmy Naouna is of Kanak origin; the Indigenous Melanesian people of Kanaky-New Caledonia, and a member of PALIKA Political Bureau, a pro-independence party. Jimmy graduated from La Trobe University Melbourne in 1994 and has since worked around the Pacific, formerly at the *Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Secretariat* and the *Pacific Concerns Resources Centre* in Suva, Fiji in the early 2000s, before joining the *Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat* in Port Vila, Vanuatu in 2010, after a stint in the Nickel mining industry in New Caledonia. He is now a senior advisor on regional and multilateral affairs.

### **Anna Naupa**

*PhD Candidate, School of Culture, History and Language, ANU & Research Fellow, Pacific Security College, ANU*

Anna Naupa is a ni-Vanuatu PhD Candidate at ANU's School of Culture, History and Language, where her research examines the intersection between *kastom* (traditional ways of the place) and diplomacy between Vanuatu and its neighbours. Her research interests also extend to Pacific politics, statecraft, cultural security, and Melanesian diplomacy, on which she has published for a range of academic and policy audiences. She has worked at regional levels in the Pacific and is active in community-based cultural heritage documentation and preservation on her ancestral island of Erromango in southern Vanuatu.

### **Filomena Nelson**

*Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme*

Filomena Nelson is an experienced climate and disaster resilience expert with a proven track record of over 20+ years in climate change adaptation and climate-induced loss and damage, disaster risk management and national planning. She is specialised in developing forward-thinking national strategies and plans that prioritise practical cost-effective adaptation interventions, placed-based responses to addressing loss and damage and effective disaster reduction actions, fostering long-term resilience in developing country contexts across over 22 Pacific Island countries and territories. She is recognised for enhancing capacities of diverse stakeholder groups, empowering them in effective adaptation, loss and damage responses and disaster risk management. She is adept at leading high-performing teams, driving resilient and sustainable development across Pacific Small Islands Developing States for a resilient future.

### **David Oakeshott**

*Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU*

David Oakeshott is a Fellow in the Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU, whose research interests are in the relationship between peace and formal education. He has conducted research on these issues in Bougainville and Solomon Islands and is a co-investigator on the project discussed in the panel *Partners for Peace: Lessons from and for Bougainville's Office of Missing Persons*. David's book, *Schooling, Conflict and Peace in the Southwestern Pacific*, was published by Bristol University Press in 2025. He has appeared on the *New Books Network* podcast and published in leading academic journals in Education and Pacific Studies, as well as policy-relevant outlets.

### **Thiago Cintra Oppermann**

*Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU*

Dr Thiago Cintra Oppermann is a researcher at the ANU whose work examines the history and social organisation of Bougainville and electoral politics in PNG. His research focuses on the dynamics of state, society, and governance in the Pacific, with particular attention to village-state relations and the political economy of colonial and postcolonial Melanesia. He has developed systematic methodologies for analysing electoral observation data, contributing to a

deeper understanding of PNG's local-level government elections. Through participation in election observation missions and applied research, his work offers valuable insights into governance, political processes, and social organisation across the Pacific region.

### **Elizabeth Peak**

*Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*

Ms Peak currently serves as Deputy Secretary and Head of the Office of the Pacific in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Prior to that she was Deputy Head and First Assistant Secretary, Pacific Strategy Division (2020–2023), co-Head of the COVID Development Taskforce and First Assistant Secretary Human Development and Governance Division (2019–2020). Ms Peak has served overseas as Minister Counsellor (Economic) at the Australian Embassy in Beijing (2016–2019) and Counsellor at the Australian High Commission in Ottawa (2006–2008). Ms Peak has represented Australia in negotiation of free trade agreements and in the United Nations on climate change, including as Assistant Secretary, Free Trade Agreements Division (2014–2016), Assistant Secretary, Multilateral Climate Negotiations (2010–2011), Director of the Office of International Climate Law (2008–2010). Prior to joining DFAT, Ms Peak was a lawyer at Freehills and Dwyer Durack. Ms Peak holds an Executive Master of Business Administration from Kellogg-HKUST (2014), Master of Laws (International) from ANU (2009) and a Bachelor of Laws (Hons) and Bachelor of Arts from the University of Queensland (1996).

### **Prashanth Pillay**

*Australian Broadcasting Corporation*

Dr Prashanth Pillay leads the research and evaluation team at ABC International Development. He has published on regional media development and youth political engagement in Australia.

### **Judy Putt**

*Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU*

With postgraduate degrees in social anthropology and criminology, Dr Judy Putt has undertaken extensive research in crime and justice with a focus on action-oriented and collaborative research, mixed-methods, and on practice and policy relevance. In the field of public criminology, Judy has authored or co-authored more than 50 reports, papers, and articles on a wide range of topics, such as gendered crime and justice, missing persons, crime in the fishing industry, and people trafficking. Since joining the Department of Pacific Affairs, she has focused on policing and justice responses to domestic and family violence, crime and community safety, and criminal justice reform. Currently she is involved in major projects in PNG on service delivery, including the law and justice sector, and on child safety.

### **Anouk Ride**

*Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU*

Dr Anouk Ride is a sociologist with an interest in peace and conflict in the Pacific Islands region. She was based in Solomon Islands for two decades doing policy orientated research and has managed over 20 projects with Pacific governments, media, police and correctional services, regional organisations, and universities. Current academic roles include Associate Professor with the Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU and Adjunct Senior Fellow with Solomon Islands National University. She has a h-index of 12, and has produced numerous journal articles, four books and 13 reports, including the first regional [report](#) on riots in the Pacific. Her most cited work is a [book](#) on community resilience in natural disasters. She was awarded the Dean's Award for Outstanding Research Higher Degree Theses from University of Queensland for her PhD [dissertation](#) on narratives of conflict and peace in Solomon Islands.

### **Akka Rimon**

*Pacific Security College, ANU*

Akka Rimon is a Research and Engagement Fellow at the Pacific Security College. She first joined the College as one of its inaugural PhD scholarship recipients, completing her doctoral research at the ANU's School of Regulation and Global Governance. Her research examined labour migration as a climate adaptation strategy in Kiribati and in doing so developed a Kiribati-grounded framework called 'Te Waa (the canoe) of Mobility'. This cultural-centric lens highlighted community perspectives, shedding light on the intricate dynamics driving climate-related mobility, and deepening understanding on the dual impacts of labour migration. Akka's

research is part of the Development Policy Centre's Pacific Engagement Visa Project, where she investigates the experiences of i-Kiribati applicants to the PEV in Australia.

### **Simon Robins**

*University of York*

Simon Robins is a practitioner and researcher with an interest in humanitarian protection, human rights, and transitional justice. For two decades he has combined academic research with a consulting practice focusing on evaluation and program support with international agencies, including the UN and NGOs, with an emphasis on states emerging from conflict and violence. He is a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Applied Human Rights at the University of York. His academic work is driven by a desire to put the needs of victims of conflict at the heart of efforts to address its legacies, and this has led to his engaging with victim-centred and therapeutic approaches to histories of violence. Much of his work has focused on the missing and the disappeared in conflict and migration, taking critical approaches to transitional justice and global human rights practice.

### **Nayahamui Rooney**

*School of Culture, History and Language, ANU*

Dr Nayahamui Rooney is a Senior Lecturer in Pacific Studies in the program in Gender, Media, and Cultural Studies in the School of Culture, History and Language, ANU, and the Chair of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau. Her research focuses on a range of cross-cutting topics, including gender and social issues in PNG. She has examined the social and cultural changes in her homeland of Manus Island brought about by the Australian offshore detention centre, bringing her family history into dialogue with transnational transformations. She holds a PhD from the ANU.

### **Alma Sedler**

*United Nations Development Programme, Papua New Guinea*

Dr Alma Sedlar is the UNDP Chief Technical Advisor on Anti-Corruption in the Pacific, leading initiatives to strengthen transparency, accountability, and integrity across government and public institutions. She oversees capacity-building programs, legislative consultations, and risk-reduction workshops in partnership with national stakeholders, civil society, and international partners, including the European Union and UNODC. Dr Sedlar brings decades of experience in anti-corruption practice and governance, having served as Chair of Transparency International Slovenia and Deputy Chief Commissioner of Slovenia's Commission for the Prevention of Corruption. Her expertise includes whistleblower protection, legislative reform, public sector risk assessment, and ethical governance. Through her work, she has designed and delivered training for magistrates, public officials, and civil society, promoting rights-based approaches to integrity and good governance. Her leadership supports governments in the Pacific to meet international transparency standards while fostering equitable, accountable, and sustainable development.

### **Faye Siota**

*Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Solomon Islands Government*

Ms Faye Siota is the Deputy Director for the Inshore Fisheries Division, within the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Solomon Islands. She holds a Masters degree in Fisheries Policy from the University of Wollongong. Faye holds more than 10 years' experience on research around supporting rural communities towards better marine resource management and improved livelihood and nutrition. GESI, as a cross-cutting component to resource management initiatives, has enabled Faye to take an interest in growing her research sphere in the gender space as well. Her work focuses on the improvement of community-based resource management whilst being 'gender aware' and 'sensitive' to people, place and culture, throughout its process. Through her research, she looks at community context and culture relating to how gender norms and power dynamics can affect marine resource use and access.

### **Graeme Smith**

*Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU*

Graeme Smith is a Senior Fellow with the Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU, where he leads the geopolitics cluster. His team's research focus includes PRC aid, investment, migration, military engagement, policing, and transnational crime in the Pacific. He is the co-author of *The*

*China Alternative: Changing Regional Order in the Pacific Islands* (ANU Press, 2021) and last year testified to Congress, informing the United States' Pacific strategy. His work is published in *The Australian Journal of International Affairs*, *Third World Quarterly*, *Regulation and Governance*, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *Pacific Affairs*, and *The China Journal*. He is the winner of best article prizes in *The Journal of Pacific History* and *The China Quarterly*. He also hosts the awarding-winning *Little Red Podcast* and edits the Pacific Currents section of the *Journal of Pacific History*.

### **Raihaamana Tevahitua**

*PhD Candidate, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU*

Raihaamana Tevahitua is from Tahiti. He holds degrees in public law and geopolitics. His doctoral research focuses on the external relations of French Pacific territories. His mission is to promote the interests of Pacific Peoples in the current strategic cycle.

### **Anita Togolo**

*ERIAS Group*

Anita Togolo is a Bougainvillean–Australian woman, born in Bougainville and based in Canberra. She is an anthropologist, employed as a senior social scientist and PNG Country Manager at ERIAS Group, an Australian firm specialising in environmental and social impact assessment and management consultancy in energy, resource and infrastructure sectors. In 2018 Anita also became a founding director of an Indigenous-owned recruitment agency, 3 Emus Recruitment, a business focused on Aboriginal executive recruitment. Her doctorate, attained at the ANU in 2022, focused on Indigenous entrepreneurship and landowner businesses in PNG's mining sector. In addition, her Honours thesis (Development Studies) looked at customary land ownership and economic development in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. She also has published a chapter 'Matriliny under Siege? Exploring the Matrilineal Descent System in a Modernising Bougainville' on Bougainville women's experiences. Anita spent five years in Central Australia, including in a remote Aboriginal community, where she worked predominantly in the community and education sectors with at-risk Indigenous youth. She is passionate about sustainable outcomes for Indigenous peoples impacted by extractive resource development.

### **Natasha Turia**

*PhD Candidate, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU*

Natasha Turia is a Papua New Guinean whose research examines the extent of PNG's decentralised recruitment practices in unlocking its labour mobility aspirations through participation in Pacific Australia Labour Mobility and Recognised Seasonal Employers schemes. Natasha has been involved in the implementation and review of PNG's decentralised recruitment process since 2019 and continues to engage with sub-national level governments and multilateral stakeholders supporting labour mobility projects in PNG. She also leads Pacific Engagement Visa-related research specific to Papua New Guineans' experiences and contributes to other broader migration research across the Pacific region.

### **Anthony Tutugoro**

*Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie/University of New Caledonia*

Anthony Tutugoro holds a PhD in Political Science. He has taken a particular interest in studying the independence movement in New Caledonia, theories of collective action, and political violence. His work as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of New Caledonia, currently focusing on theories of power sharing and New Caledonia politics through the Open Research Area and ANR (*Agence Nationale de la Recherche*) project entitled 'INCLUSIVEPEACE – Citizen Inclusion in Power-Sharing Settlements'.

### **Frances C Koya Vaka'uta**

*Pacific Community (SPC)*

Frances leads culture-related initiatives across 22 Pacific Island countries and territories, including the Pacific Regional Culture Strategy 2022–2032 and the Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture. With three decades of experience in education, research, and policy, she has advanced work in teacher education, Pacific epistemologies, and arts and culture. Frances spent 23 years at the University of the South Pacific, holding senior roles such as Associate Dean Research & Internationalisation and Director of the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture, and supporting development of 20+ courses across print, face-to-face, and online delivery modes. She has

contributed to 35+ policy frameworks at institutional, national, and regional levels, served on UNESCO's Global Expert Group on Cultural Statistics, and is Traditional Knowledge Adviser to the Office of the Pacific Oceans Commissioner (PIFS). Frances is passionate about self-determination and social justice, and is deeply committed to strengthening Pacific-led, contextually relevant, culturally inclusive development.

### **Grant Walton**

*Politics and Governance (PoGo) Department & Development Policy Centre, ANU*

Associate Professor Grant Walton works at the Development Policy Centre and the Policy and Governance Program within the Crawford School of Public Policy, ANU. He is also a residential fellow with the Australian and New Zealand School of Government. Grant draws on political geography and political science to research issues related to corruption, education policy, international development, and civil society. He has been nominated for the Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani Anti-Corruption Excellence Award, Academic Research and Education (sponsored by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), and has been globally recognised as one of Australia's most influential corruption scholars. For more than a decade Grant has conducted research in the Pacific, Africa and Asia for international donors and non-governmental organisations, with most of his research focusing on PNG and the Pacific region. He is the author of dozens of journal articles, book chapters, working papers and blogs; his book *Anti-Corruption and its Discontents: Local, National and International Perspectives on Corruption in Papua New Guinea* was published by Routledge in 2017.

### **Amanda H A Watson**

*Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU*

Dr Amanda H A Watson is the leading expert on digital technologies and infrastructures in the Pacific Islands region. Amanda's expertise includes satellite internet services, undersea internet cables, and telecommunications in the Pacific. She is actively engaged in monitoring, analysing, and commenting on telecommunication sector regulatory processes and developments in the Pacific. She is a Fellow at the Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU.

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## Contact us

Department of Pacific Affairs  
HC Coombs Building, 9 Fellows Road, ANU, ACT 2600  
E [dpa@anu.edu.au](mailto:dpa@anu.edu.au)  
W [bellschool.anu.edu.au/dpa](https://bellschool.anu.edu.au/dpa)

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- Future student enquiries: [asiapacific@anu.edu.au](mailto:asiapacific@anu.edu.au)

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