



# Do many hands make light work?

An assessment of pooled service delivery in the Pacific island region

# Development Policy Centre

**Dr Matthew Dornan,  
Research Fellow**



**Dr Tess Newton Cain,  
Visiting Fellow**



# What this presentation will cover

- + What was this research about & why did we do it?
- + How did we do the research?
- + What did we find out?
- + What does this mean?
- + How is this relevant within the context of the Pacific Plan?

# What is pooling of services?

*"The reality is that, with the greatest goodwill in the world, many of these countries are too small to be viable in the normal understanding of that expression and we really have to develop an approach that I could loosely call... **pooled regional governance**... it applies with airlines, it applies with policing, it applies with a whole lot of other things. But it's just not possible if you've got an island state of fewer than 100,000 people to expect to have all of the sophisticated arms of government"*

John Howard, July 2003

# Research gap re pooling of services

2004: Auckland Declaration: *"the serious challenges facing countries of the region warranted serious and careful examination of the pooling of scarce resources to strengthen national capabilities"*

2005: *Toward a New Pacific Regionalism* – a study undertaken by ADB & Commonwealth Secretariat to inform development of the Pacific Plan

2013: Review of the Pacific Plan:

*"...a need to analyse the critical success factors and likely impediments to improved implementation and sustained service delivery. In short, there is a need to work out why some initiatives have been successful and why others have failed, and to use these lessons to improve implementation"*  
(Review Report, p 113)

# What did we do?

- + We fretted a lot about what was and what wasn't pooled service delivery
- + We settled on 20 initiatives that qualified
- + We examined available information (e.g. annual reports, review documents) & we interviewed key players in the design, implementation & evaluation of these activities
- + We assessed the extent to which each one had succeeded or not

# Assessment criteria

- + Was the pooling initiative ever implemented?
- + Has the pooling initiative been sustained over a period of time or did it cease?
- + Has it remedied a deficit in service provision at the national or sub-national level?
- + Has it delivered a service/good other than capacity building?

# The results are in...

- + Of the 20 initiatives we examined:
  - + 11 had achieved 'some success'
  - + 7 were 'primarily failures'
  - + 2 could not be assessed

# What makes pooling in the Pacific challenging?

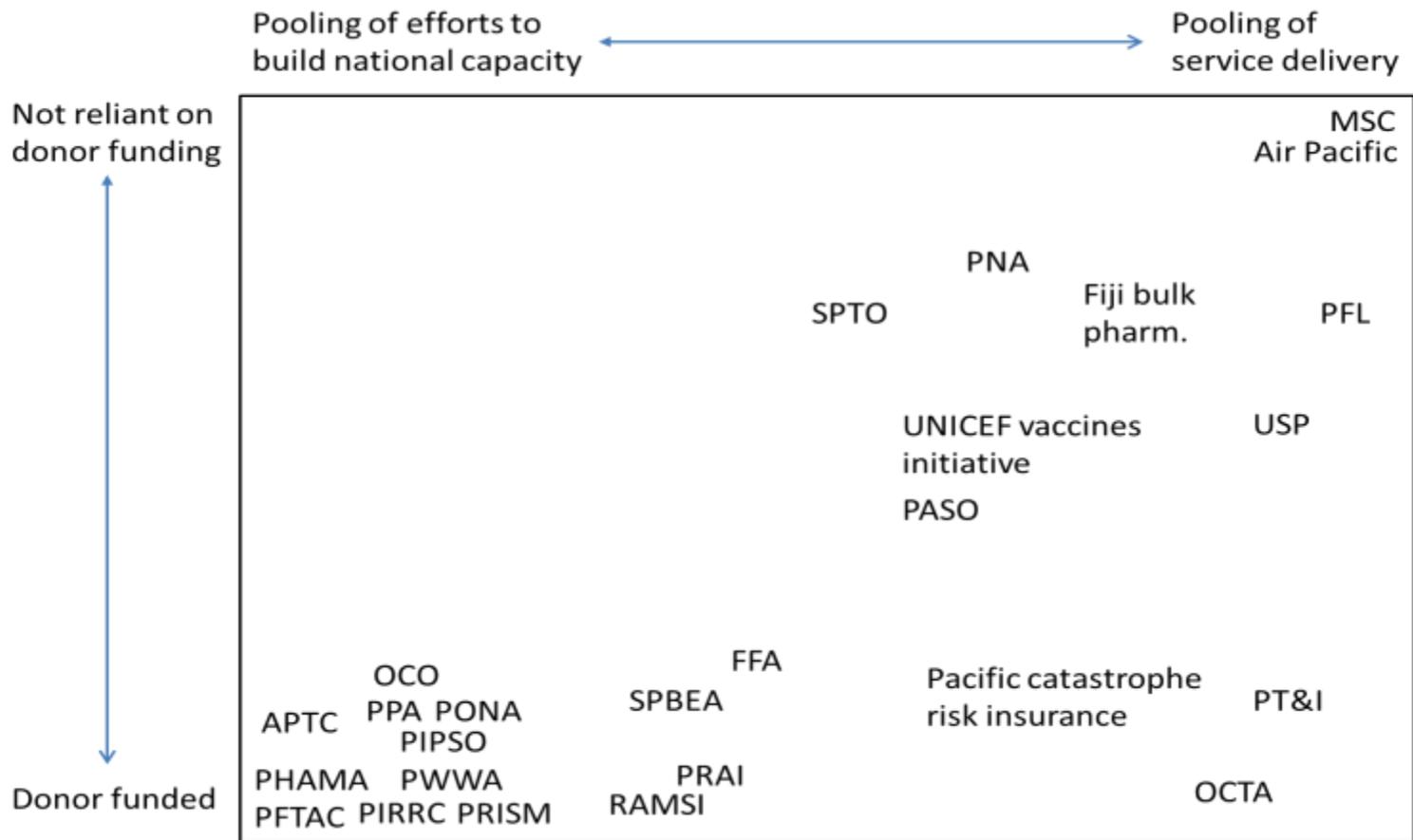
- + Smallness
- + Voluntary nature of 'club' membership
- + Political economy factors
- + Legitimacy of regional organisations

# Success factors

- + Fill a clear gap in service delivery
- + Avoid areas where national government or the private sector is already operating effectively
- + Avoid/resolve conflicts of interest
- + Employ good management & consultation
- + Access technical knowledge & support and adapt to use new technology where appropriate

## 2 features particular to the Pacific

- + Reliance on donor funding
- + Focus on capacity building



# Our conclusions

- + Mixed results
- + Voluntary regionalism among small states is difficult
- + Political economy factors work against rather than for regional service delivery
- + A patchwork has emerged
- + Reform may be of benefit
- + Future expansion is likely to be slow