

The background of the slide is a photograph of an orchard. In the foreground, there are dense green trees with some yellow fruit visible. A silver metal ladder is leaning against one of the trees. The sky is blue with some white clouds. The title text is overlaid on the center of the image.

Migrant-Diaspora Connections and Pacific Food Worker Wellbeing in Australia

Dr Victoria Stead (Deakin University), Dr Kirstie Petrou (Griffith University) and Dr Makiko Nishitani (La Trobe University)

Introduction

- Developing collaboration – researchers & Pacific community partners
- Focused on the role of diaspora Pacific Islander communities in supporting Pacific food workers' wellbeing
- We need broader, more holistic, and culturally-grounded approaches to wellbeing
- 'Pacific food workers' refers to horticultural and meat-packing sectors, and includes PALM, NZ-SCV, undocumented, Australian citizens and permanent residents.



Ms Ema Vueti, Pacific Islands Council of Queensland

Ms Mellisa Silaga, Point of Difference Studio,
Shepparton

Mr Dean Wickham, Pacific Islander Network,
Mildura

Dr Victoria Stead – anthropology, Pacific studies,
Shepparton region

Dr Makiko Nishitani – anthropology, Mildura region

Dr Ruth Faleolo – Pacific studies, Pacific wellbeing

Dr Kirstie Petrou – human geography, Vanuatu

Prof Tony La Montagne – public health, workplace
health

Dr Elsa Underhill– workplace health & safety,
workplace relations



NEWS ABC News (AU) + Follow

Seasonal workers evacuated from Shearwater property after inspection alleges 'high risk to health and wellbeing' of occupants

21 Feb

'No support': Pacific Island labour-hire workers fear \$6,000 cost of giving birth in Australia

Pregnant women working under the Palm scheme face exorbitant healthcare bills and no easy options

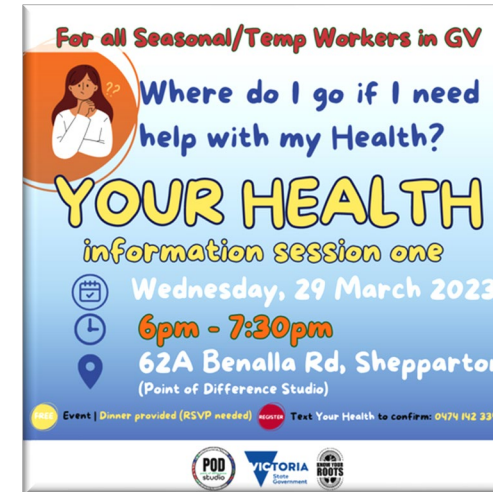
Australia's expanded Pacific labour scheme could erode workers' rights, ex-official warns

Wellbeing challenges

- Food workers face widespread wage theft and exploitative and dangerous conditions
→ wellbeing impacts include physical workplace injury, illness resulting from poor diet and living conditions, isolation and social disconnection, mental and emotional harm, and death.
- Pacific Island sending countries increasingly vocal in their concerns about worker wellbeing.
- Hard to quantify accurately, and we know there are disincentives to reporting.
- COVID-19 pandemic intensified many vulnerabilities

The role of diaspora

- Australian Pacific Islander communities are responding to the vulnerabilities facing Pacific food workers.
- Care includes clothing drives, food provision, legal advice, health support, care for children born to PALM/SWP mothers, cultural and religious community.
- These networks of connection encompass workers and community members with diverse migration statuses.
- Intra-community relations: a source of strength and wellbeing, but also potentially of strain, tension and burden.



Community-organized health information provision, Shepparton



Community-call out for donations for PALM workers, Mildura

Existing approaches to wellbeing



Regulatory approaches – e.g. accommodation requirements – can produce more coercive and disempowered conditions for workers.



Pastoral care has often involved large non-profit providers without strong local or cultural connections



Inclusion of PI peak bodies in pastoral care, and the Community Connections program, are positive – but currently under-documented



Lack of cultural understanding a problem throughout the industry

Learning from Pacific wellbeing perspectives

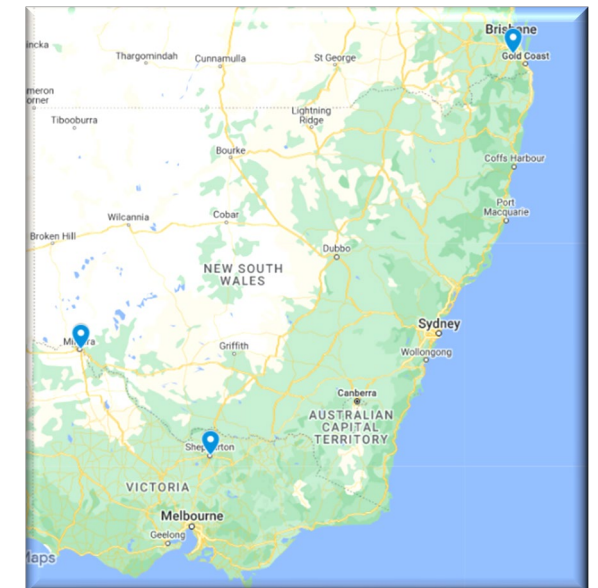
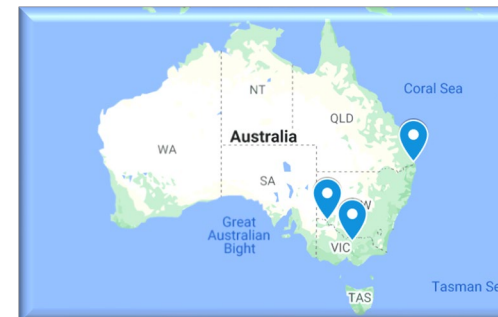
- Rich body of work on Pacific wellbeing within the field of Pacific studies
- Pacific wellbeing perspectives as holistic and culturally embedded, encompassing familial and spiritual considerations alongside material ones. Migration and work are often significant, but in ways that differ from Eurocentric norms (Faleolo 2019; Enari & Faleolo 2020)
- Wellbeing as part of Pacific *world-making* (e.g. Diaz 2019; Lilomaiaava-Doktor 2009; Teaiwa 2015)
- Pacific studies methods – *talanoa*, *e-talanoa*, *tok stori* ...

A pathway for research

- Inter-disciplinary, with strong community partnerships
- Case studies – Shepparton (Vic), Mildura (Vic), Logan (Qld)
- Combination of ethnographic and Pacific studies methods, longitudinal documentation, in dialogue with public health methods (modelling etc.)



Our research will document existing community initiatives (formal and informal) over time



Practical implications



Aim to produce multi-modal forms of documentation, and practical **resources for wellbeing** to support policy-making, industry practice, and community organizing and advocacy.



Pandemic highlighted problem of lack of wellbeing resources for CALD communities.



Pacific Engagement Visa and family accompaniment are likely to increase PI population in Australia, and increase the diversity of cohorts of PI people involved in food sector work and beyond.