Australian National University

USP
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

2025 PACIFIC UPDATE

TUESDAY 3 TO THURSDAY 5 JUNE
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC
JAPAN-PACIFIC ICT CENTRE
LAUCALA CAMPUS, SUVA, FIJI

SUPPORTED BY

PACIFIC RESEARCH PROGRAM
AN INITIATIVE OF THE AUSTRALIAN AID PROGRAM

KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG
REGIONAL PROGRAMME
AUSTRALIA AND THE PACIFIC

#PacificUpdate

2025 PACIFIC UPDATE – TUESDAY PROGRAM

TUESDAY 3 JUNE

8.30am **Registration**

9.00am **Welcome and opening plenary**

Auditorium

Moderator: Dr Manumatavai Tupou-Roosen, Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Regional Campuses and Global Engagement), The University of the South Pacific

Welcome Remarks

Professor Pal Ahluwalia, Vice Chancellor and President, The University of the South Pacific

Welcome Remarks

His Excellency Mr Peter Roberts, Australia's High Commissioner to Fiji

Keynote address

Hon Baron Waqa, Secretary General, Pacific Islands Forum

Keynote address

A new approach to measuring the economic performance of the Pacific islands

Stephen Howes and Rubayat Chowdhury, Development Policy Centre, Australian National University

10.30am **Morning tea**

11.00am **Panel 1a: Regional integration and governance**

Auditorium

Chair: Tess Newton Cain, Sustineo

Why traditional media matters more than ever in shaping the Pacific's digital future
Prashanth Pillay, Australian Broadcasting Corporation and Alexander Rheeney, Pacific Media Assistance Scheme

Tuvalu's diplomatic preference: beyond the checkbook
John Augé, Center for Strategic and International Studies

Community rule and order making in Melanesia
Miranda Forsyth, Australian National University and Sinclair Dinnen, Australian National University

A Blue Pacific rules-based order: our rules, our home
Joel Nilon, Australian National University and Sione Tekiteki, Auckland University of Technology

Note: Bold text indicates the presenter/s where there is more than one paper author. If no names are in bold text all authors intend to present.

Panel 1b: Charting a new course for accountability ecosystems in the Pacific

Video Conference Room 1 (VCR1)

Chair: Maraia Vavaitamana, United Nations Development Programme

Lisa Denney, La Trobe University

Gregoire Nimbtik, Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat

Neelesh Gounder, The University of the South Pacific

12.30pm **Lunch**

1.30pm **Panel 2a: Gender and inequality**

Auditorium

Chair: Kushneel Prakash, University of Melbourne

Significance of youth awareness of domestic violence laws in PNG and the Pacific
Minetta Daniella Kakarere, University of Papua New Guinea

Dietary patterns of Indo-Fijians and their comparison to patterns of iTaukei (indigenous) Fijians
Naohiro Nakamura, The University of the South Pacific

Empowering I-Kiribati women through entrepreneurship: kindling Kiribati and the PPAC Programme (2022)
Mereoni Tavakaturaga, Josephine Kalsuak and Tarita Bartley, The Pacific Community (SPC)

Navigating pandemics: adaptation and resilience of redundant workers in Fiji Airways
Seone Lolesio, The University of the South Pacific, Emalini Bainivalu Nakabea, The University of the South Pacific, Amalaini Tikoduadua, The University of the South Pacific and Nacanieli Rika, Consultant

Panel 2b: Unspoken rules of politics in Vanuatu

Video Conference Room 1 (VCR1)

Uncovering voter motivations and the barriers and enablers to women's political participation

Chair: Wilson Toa, Balance of Power

Hon Marie-Louise Milne, Government of Vanuatu

Telstar Jimmy, Balance of Power

Vani Nailumu, Balance of Power

3.00pm **Afternoon tea**

2025 PACIFIC UPDATE – TUESDAY PROGRAM

3.30pm **Panel 3a: Social development**

Auditorium

Chair: Rachel Payne, Partnerships for Social Protection

Life in the Pacific islands: understanding determinants of life satisfaction in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga
Kushneel Prakash, University of Melbourne

The price of darkness: economic cost of energy poverty in Pacific Island countries
Siti Nur Rosifah, Australian National University

Living without electricity in urban communities in PNG: the case of 8-Mile Settlement
Loretta Dilu, University of Papua New Guinea

Standing firm against the tides of change: land tenure system in the Kingdom of Tonga
Holomesi Finau, The University of South Pacific and Digby Race, The University of the South Pacific

Panel 3b: Filling the gaps: Reshaping social protection research in the Pacific and Timor-Leste

Video Conference Room 1 (VCR1)

Chair: Shirleen Ali, Partnerships for Social Protection

Laisa Vereti, Pacific Disability Forum

Rufino Varea, Pacific Islands Climate Action Network

5.00pm **Close**

5.30pm **Cocktail reception**
Japan-Pacific ICT Centre Marquee
Hosted by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

WEDNESDAY 4 JUNE

8.30am **Registration**

9.00am **Gender and governance plenary**
Auditorium

Keynote address

Chair: Miranda Forsyth, Australian National University

Bel isi: a PNG public-private partnership responding to gender-based violence
Tovi Amona, Bel isi PNG

Keynote address
Chair: Henrietta McNeill, Australian National University

Pacific approaches to understanding and fighting corruption
Steven Ratuva, University of Canterbury

Grant Walton, Australian National University

10.30am **Morning tea**

11.00am **Panel 4a: Corruption in the Pacific: perceptions, trends and resistance**
Auditorium

Chair: Grant Walton, Australian National University

Passports, prosperity and problems: (counter) geopolitical narratives of corruption in Vanuatu's Citizenship by Investment Scheme
Henrietta McNeill, Australian National University

Money laundering mutual evaluations in the Pacific: an update
Michael Kabuni, Australian National University

Security cooperation and corruption in the Pacific
Teddy Winn, Winn's Consultancy Limited

Addressing corruption in the context of climate change
Rimon Rimon, Kiribati journalist and Pacific Anti-Corruption Journalists Network

Panel 4b: Climate and energy
Video Conference Room 1 (VCR1)

Chair: Natasha Turia, Australian National University

Framing social protection and climate change in the Pacific
Marita Manley, Talanoa Consulting and Rachel Payne, Partnerships for Social Protection

Assessing the role of natural soundscapes in enhancing tourist satisfaction and loyalty to Fiji's nature-based tourist attractions
Vikas Gupta and Ilisapeci Matatolu, The University of the South Pacific

The impacts of expanding the oil palm industry in Papua New Guinea: the case of Kairak Community, East New Britain Province
Melga Mevat, Pacific Adventist University

Energizing remote islands in Tonga with mini-grid solar systems
Paea-'i-Muli Tau'aika and Seone Soakimi Lolesio, The University of the South Pacific

12.30pm **Lunch**

1.30pm **Panel 5a: The future of work**
Auditorium

Inclusive, climate-resilient and digitally enabled labour markets

Chair: Lavenia Rokovucago, The Asia Foundation

Abigail Chang, Pacific Australia Skills

Vera Chute, Women's Entrepreneurs Business Council

Senimelia Seru, Fiji Disabled People's Federation

Mishael Chand, Cadmus

Panel 5b: Economic development
Video Conference Room 1 (VCR1)

Chair: Alyssa Leng, Australian National University

Challenges and issues in assessment of the economic impact of tourism: a Tongan case study
Semisi Taumoepeau, Auckland Institute of Studies

Social constraints on capital accumulation in Melanesian economies
Martin Davies, Washington and Lee University

The role of the enabling environment in the success of micro and small enterprises in small island developing states
Seone Soakimi Lolesio, The University of the South Pacific

Correspondent banking relationships – impacts and mitigation
Denton Rarawa and Rodney Kirarock, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

2025 PACIFIC UPDATE – WEDNESDAY PROGRAM

3.00pm **Afternoon tea**

3.30pm **Panel 6a: Fiji economy**

Auditorium

Chair: Keshmeer Makun, The University of the South Pacific

Fiji's macroeconomic performance amid global and domestic uncertainty: progress, challenges and policy options
Janesh Sami, The University of the South Pacific

Economic development and poverty reduction: income and human capital nexus in Fiji
Rukmani Gounder, Massey University

Fiji's current development priorities

Elisha Mala, Acting Manager Policy Planning and Sectoral/Regional, Ministry of Finance, Fiji

The way forward for electoral reform in Fiji

Jon Fraenkel, Professor of Comparative Politics, Victoria University of Wellington

Panel 6b: The potential of AI in policymaking and development in the Pacific

Video Conference Room 1 (VCR1)

Chair: Ryan Edwards, Australian National University

Miranda Forsyth, Australian National University

Jope Tarai, Australian National University

5.00pm **Close**

5.45pm **Conference dinner**
Japan-Pacific ICT Centre Marquee
Hosted by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

2025 PACIFIC UPDATE – THURSDAY PROGRAM

THURSDAY 5 JUNE

PACIFIC MIGRATION WORKSHOP

Towards an inclusive future: strengthening Pacific integration through human mobility

8.30am **Registration**

Auditorium

9.00am **Welcome and opening plenary**

Auditorium

Chair: Charlotte Bedford, Australian National University

Keynote address

Pacific Mobility
Jan Hutton, First Assistant Secretary, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Keynote address

Solomon Islands labour mobility: achievements, outlook, and issues
Christina Marau, Solomon Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade

10.00am **Session 1: Socio-economic analysis**

Chair: Neelesh Gounder, The University of the South Pacific

Ko e kakai, íkai ko e palopalema: A social impacts study of temporary labour mobility in Tonga
Akosita Polota, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Tonga and **Kristy Ward**, Pacific Labour Mobility Support Program

Economic development and poverty alleviation in a Papua New Guinea: fishing island community through Pacific Labour Mobility Schemes
Keimelo Gima, The University of Papua New Guinea

Beyond dependency: MIRAB as climate resilience strategy
Masami Tsujita, National University of Samoa

Human mobility, demographic change and growth prospects in PICS
David Abbott, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

11.30am **Morning tea**

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2025 PACIFIC UPDATE – THURSDAY PROGRAM

11.45am **Session 2: Reproductive health**

Achieving reproductive justice for Pacific labour mobility participants

Chair: Dolores Devesi, International Planned Parenthood Federation, Fiji

Lindy Kanan, Australian National University

Sera Ratu, Reproductive and Family Health Association of Fiji

Sarai Amataga, True Relationships and Reproductive Health

12.45pm **Lunch**

1.45pm **Session 3: Pacific diaspora**

Chair: Lisa Denney, La Trobe University

Trump's deportations to the Pacific Islands: diplomacy and risk
Henreitta McNeill, Australian National University

Understanding Pacific communities in Australia
Huiyuan (Sharon) Liu, Australian National University and Toan Nguyen, Australian National University

Navigating cultural identity and integration: the dualistic transition of Pasifika youth in Australia
Florence Hafoka-Kafoika, Alfred Deakin Institute for Globalisation and Citizenship

How sovereignty is exercised (or constrained) under the free association model
Mata Rakanui, Office of the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands

3.15pm **Afternoon tea**

3.30pm **Session 4: New developments**

Chair: Ryan Edwards, Australian National University

Narratives, information and immigration policy preferences
Alyssa Leng, Australian National University

2024 Pacific Engagement Visa scorecard: Papua New Guinea's experiences
Natasha Turia, Australian National University

Update on PIFS Pacific Regional Labour Mobility principles
Manisha Mudaliar, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and **Sachindra Singh**, International Organization for Migration

A preview of Pacific Labour Mobility Survey Wave Two
Dung Doan, World Bank and **Ryan Edwards,** Australian National University

5.00pm **Closing Remarks**

5.15pm **Kava and drinks**

Did you enjoy the conference?

We’d love to hear your feedback.

Please fill in our quick survey at
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PacificUpdate2025