

# Papua New Guinea's "foreign" ministers

by Henry Ivarature

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Justin Tkachenko MP (centre) and Dame Carol Kidu (second from right) in Kira Kira, Papua New Guinea, March 2023

*Photo Credit: Hon. Justin Tkatchenko MP/Facebook*

"Self-sidelined" foreign minister Justin Tkachenko's inappropriate description of individuals who criticised his daughter's Tik Tok video (flaunting tax-payer funded travel to the United Kingdom for King Charles III's coronation) as "**primitive animals**", should not overshadow the selfless contributions of naturalised non-indigenous citizens including those appointed as government ministers – "foreign" ministers.

Who are these "foreign" ministers who have sacrificed a lot to the development of Papua New Guinea, their adopted country?

From 1972 up to the present parliament, 17 naturalised citizens have been appointed ministers in various governments. Except for Dame Carol Kidu, all are men: Bruce Jephcott, Barry Holloway, Warren Dutton, Karl Stack, Dennis Young, Neville Bourne, Hugo Berghuser, Timothy Ward, Robert Suckling, Tim Neville, Peter Barter, Henry Smith, John Hickey, Ken Fairweather, Sasindran Muthuvel and Tkachenko. Although dual citizenship was legalised for eight countries, including Australia in 2016, Australians like Tkachenko (who is the spouse of a PNG citizen) forfeited dual citizenship to be eligible for public office.

The majority are Australians, including Smith who migrated from London at a young age. The rest are British (Young), American (Stack), German (Berghuser), and Indian (Muthuvel). Of the 13 Australians, four like Tkachenko are originally from Melbourne, including Jephcott, Suckling and Fairweather. The Queenslanders are Dame Carol and Ward. Dutton, Hickey, and Barter originated from New South Wales, while Bourne hailed from Perth in Western Australia.

They played important roles in the private and public sectors before entering politics. Even after politics, many remained active in business, the hospitality industry, charitable organisations, and commerce. Others served as political mentors and advisers to successive governments. They are an integral part of PNG's political, social, and economic development.

Dutton and Holloway were patrol officers (“kiaps”). As kiaps, they were the symbols of state in colonial and postcolonial administrations. Stack was an assistant provincial commissioner. Jephcott was a grazier and president of the New Guinea Graziers Association. The majority were successful businessmen. Some like Holloway and Dutton were not only foundational members but pivotal in the formation of PANGU Pati and the People’s Progress Party.

For those whose educational qualifications are available, the majority, like Tkachenko, completed secondary education. Some were highly educated: for example, Jephcott held a degree in science from the University of Adelaide, Stack graduated as a criminologist from the University of Hawai’i, Dame Carol graduated with a secondary teacher’s certificate from the University of Queensland and taught before entering politics, and Bourne and Dutton matriculated.

On average, they served three terms in parliament. Holloway, who was first elected to the House of Assembly in 1964, served five terms and was the regional member for Eastern Highlands; he exited politics after the 1987 elections. Queenslander Ward, who was the MP for Bogia in Madang, is the second longest serving naturalised citizen in parliament after Holloway. He entered parliament in a by-election for Esa’ala following the death of Norman Eveneth, and was subsequently re-elected in three consecutive elections for Bogia. His four terms as a politician ended after the 1997 election.

Many naturalised citizens have been appointed to ministerial portfolios in every PNG parliament. On average, four naturalised citizens have been appointed minister in each parliament. The highest number of naturalised citizens appointed as ministers in a term of parliament – in the third and fourth parliaments – is five.

The two regions where most naturalised citizens have been elected are the open and regional electorates of Mamose and Southern. They include the regional electorates of Madang and West Sepik and the open electorates of Menymaya, Bogia and Sumkar. Jephcott and Barter held the Madang regional electorate twice. Similarly, Ward and Hickey held the open seat of Bogia for three consecutive parliamentary terms. Others who held regional seats were Stack (West Sepik), Young (Milne Bay), Berghuser (National Capital District), and Muthuvel who has consecutively held onto the West New Britain regional seat since the 2017 election.

In the Highlands region, Holloway is the only one to hold the Eastern Highlands regional seat while Smith held the Goroka open electorate. Open electorates in the nation’s capital where naturalised citizens have held seats are Moresby-Northwest and Moresby-South. The latter was initially held by Dame Carol from 2002 to 2012. She elected not to recontest this electorate in the 2012 election which Tkachenko

won and now holds. The other open electorate in the Southern region held by a naturalised citizen is North Fly. Dutton, who did three terms as an MP, was first elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1968. He held this seat until the 1987 election but not without trying in subsequent elections.

Naturalised citizens have been appointed to several economic, social, infrastructure and institutional and regulatory ministries. Holloway was finance minister in the second parliament under prime minister Michael Somare until defeated by Julius Chan in the first successful vote of no confidence in March 1980. Tkachenko is the first naturalised citizen to be appointed foreign affairs minister. Dame Carol has the record of serving as minister for community development twice in consecutive terms of parliament, including as speaker of parliament and leader of the opposition. Young is the only other expatriate to serve as speaker.

From 1972 to 2022, naturalised citizens have collectively served an average of 56 months. Tkachenko has surpassed Stack's record of 119 months as minister in three terms of parliament as the longest-serving naturalised citizen, with over 180 months in total as minister. Stack held ministerial portfolios in the second, third and fourth parliaments. Tkachenko has held ministerial portfolios in the eighth, ninth and tenth parliaments.

The third longest-serving naturalised citizen minister is Dame Carol with a total of 109 months. But unlike Tkachenko and Stack, she achieved this feat while holding the same portfolio in two consecutive terms of parliament, doing much to advance human security.

PNG's "foreign" ministers, despite any shortcomings, are an integral part of PNG's political culture and life, in the past, present, and future.

### **Table 1: Naturalised citizen MPs, months in parliament, 1972-2022**

# DEVPOLICYBLOG

Parliament	Total months	First 1972-77	Second 1977-82	Third 1982-87	Fourth 1987-92	Fifth 1992-97	Sixth 1997-02	Seventh 2002-07	Eighth 2007-12	Ninth 2012-17	Tenth 2017-22
Bruce Jephcott	78	63	15								
Barry Holloway	63		31	32							
Warren Dutton	48		29	19							
Karl Stack	119		30	40	49						
Dennis Young	39			35	4						
Neville Bourne	19			19							
Hugo Berghuser	22					22					
Timothy Ward	27					10	17				
Robert Suckling	24					24					
Tim Neville	26						26				
Peter Barter	80						22	58			
Henry Smith	19							19			
Dame Carol Kidu	109							61	48		
John Hickey	51							12	39		
Ken Fairweather	12								12		
Justin Tkachenko	180								60	60	60
Sasindran Muthuvel	36									18	18

Source: Author's calculations from publicly available data

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