

Progress in women's representation in the Pacific

By Tess Newton Cain
25 June 2013

The issue of women's representation in political life in the Pacific is fraught and as, we were [recently reminded](#), our region languishes at the bottom of assorted league tables in this respect.

However, there are indications that something of a shift may be in progress. Late last month, the Council of Ministers in Vanuatu (i.e. the Cabinet) [adopted](#) a policy paper providing for temporary special measures to allow for 30-34% of seats on municipal councils to be reserved for women for a period of 16 years (four terms). The necessary legislative amendments have yet to be tabled in Parliament but this remains a significant step nonetheless.

And just last week in Samoa the Parliament [unanimously passed legislation](#) providing for at least 5 seats (10%) to be filled by women with effect from the next general election. The law provides for a flexible formula that can see the number of seats in Parliament increased to up to 54 to facilitate women's participation.

These are small steps undoubtedly but they are hopefully indicative of greater strides yet to come.

About the author/s

Tess Newton Cain

Tess Newton Cain is the Project Lead for the [Pacific Hub](#) at the [Griffith Asia Institute](#) and is an associate of the Development Policy Centre.

Link: <https://devpolicy.org/progress-in-womens-representation-in-the-pacific-20130625-2/>

Date downloaded: 8 May 2024



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