2019 was the Development Policy Centre’s ninth year, and in 2020 we celebrate our tenth anniversary. We have decided to make a change, and to forgo annual reports in favour of an annual letter. I’m not sure how many people read our annual report, and we can better promote transparency by keeping our website up to date, which is our renewed commitment.

We currently work across three main areas: Papua New Guinea and the Pacific; Australian aid and global development policy. You can read about our work by visiting devpolicy.anu.edu.au. There you can also check out who our staff are (20 of them in 2019), and what they have been writing, researching or speaking about.

2019 was certainly a memorable year for us. We held our full suite of conferences: the 2019 Australasian Aid Conference in February co-hosted with The Asia Foundation in Canberra; the 2019 Pacific Update co-hosted with the University of the South Pacific in July; and the 2019 PNG Update co-hosted with the University of Papua New Guinea in August. Having the newly-installed PNG Prime Minister James Marape not only open but also participate in and close the PNG Update was not something I’ll forget in a hurry.

Another highlight of 2019 was the expansion of our labour mobility research team, with a grant from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Labour mobility has been one of my own research focus areas since I returned to Australia in 2005, and I’m delighted to have the opportunity to work with a larger team on this subject.

I was sad to say goodbye in February 2019 to Matthew Dornan, who joined the Centre in 2012 not long after it started, and served as its Deputy Director for most of that period. I’m delighted though that Matt has left us to join the World Bank, to work on... labour mobility in the Pacific. Increasingly, as I look back over the last decade, I see the “seeding” role the Centre has played (giving valuable experience to bright people and helping them on their career path) as one of the most useful things we have done.
It is a difficult task to single out particular parts of our work for attention, but a few examples of the sorts of things that I am very happy we are supporting follow:

- Terence Wood and his colleagues (principally Sachini Muller and Luke Minihan) produced our third aid stakeholder survey at the start of the year, and our third aid transparency audit at the end. I was delighted when DFAT announced this year it would seek to improve the transparency around its aid program as measured by our audit.

- Richard Curtain advised the Government of Vanuatu on their new labour mobility strategy. Richard’s extensive experience on Pacific labour mobility, both in sending countries and here in Australia, is an invaluable asset.

- Michelle Rooney led a team of ANU and PNG researchers — Mary Aisi, Dora Kuir-Ayius, Miranda Forsyth, Dunstan Lawihin and Joshua Goa — to understand the attitudes of men with regards to gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea. Given the seriousness of this problem, it is hard to imagine a more important topic.

I cannot close without mentioning the Devpolicy Blog (devpolicy.org), which is so close to my heart, not least because I have edited it with various colleagues since its inception in 2010. It is encouraging to see how the Blog is increasingly seen as a valuable platform not only by our own staff, but by others in the development sector and in the Pacific.

For transparency, we have prepared a summary financial statement on the year below. For more information, visit devpolicy.anu.edu.au. And do send us your feedback. We’re always keen to hear from supporters and critics alike at devpolicy@anu.edu.au.

Sincerely,

Professor Stephen Howes
Director
Development Policy Centre