



Australian  
National  
University



# 2025 PACIFIC UPDATE

Adobe Stock #901665694

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



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.

## 2025 PACIFIC UPDATE – TUESDAY PROGRAM

**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

## 2025 PACIFIC UPDATE – WEDNESDAY PROGRAM

### **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 Partnership

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

THURSDAY 5 JUNE

### PACIFIC MIGRATION RESEARCH 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, ikai 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**

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.

## 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: Stephen Howes, 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>**