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**International Migration in a Sea of  
Islands: Challenges and Opportunities  
for Insular Pacific Spaces**

**Richard Bedford  
Graeme Hugo**



**The University of Waikato  
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato  
HAMILTON NEW ZEALAND**

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Any queries regarding this report should be addressed to Jacques Poot, Professor of Population Economics, Population Studies Centre University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton, e-mail [jpoot@waikato.ac](mailto:jpoot@waikato.ac) or Ph +64 7 838 4685

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The University of Waikato  
Private Bag 3105  
Hamilton  
New Zealand  
[www.waikato.ac.nz/wfass/populationstudiescentre](http://www.waikato.ac.nz/wfass/populationstudiescentre)  
[pscadmin@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:pscadmin@waikato.ac.nz)

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# International Migration in a Sea of Islands: Challenges and Opportunities for Insular Pacific Spaces

Richard Bedford<sup>1</sup>  
Graeme Hugo<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

Our contribution to the International Conference “Connecting Worlds: Emigration, Immigration and Development in Insular Spaces”, held in the Azores between 28 and 30 May 2008, examines contemporary mobility of Pacific peoples in a transnational context with reference to processes of out-migration, return, re-migration and the complex systems of circular mobility between island countries as well as to and from countries on the Pacific rim. There are some significant differences between parts of the Pacific region in terms of the access their peoples have to work and residence opportunities outside their island countries. These are reviewed with reference to some major challenges for development in the region: rapid growth of youthful populations; high levels of unemployment; limited markets for local produce; unsustainable levels of extraction of timber, fish and mineral resources; changing climates; and unstable governance systems in some countries.

**Keywords:** Pacific Islands, population movement, transnational communities, development, return migration

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<sup>1</sup> Director, Population Studies Centre, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

<sup>2</sup> Director, National Research Centre for Social Applications of GIS, University of Adelaide, Adelaide

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## **1. Introduction**

In a paper that has become a classic in the literature on population movement and development in the Pacific region, Tongan sociologist and novelist, Professor Epeli Hau'ofa (1994 152-3:), invoked the metaphor of a "sea of islands" for his oceanic island world. He observed that there was a world of difference between viewing the Pacific as 'islands in a far sea' and as a 'sea of islands'. 'Islands in a far sea' emphasises dry surfaces in a vast ocean far from centres of power. When you focus this way you stress the smallness and remoteness of the islands. 'A sea of islands' invokes a more holistic perspective in which things are seen in the totality of their relationships across the ocean with other islands and with the larger spaces on the Pacific rim. He stressed that it is within this expanded world, that includes the cities of Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada, that the extent of the Pacific people's resources must be measured.

Our contribution to the International Conference "Connecting Worlds: Emigration, Immigration and Development in Insular Spaces", held in the Azores between 28 and 30 May 2008, examines contemporary mobility in this transnational context with reference to processes of out-migration, return, re-migration and the complex systems of circular mobility between island countries as well as to and from countries on the Pacific rim. There are some significant differences between parts of the Pacific region in terms of the access their peoples have to work and residence opportunities outside their island countries. These are reviewed with reference to some major challenges for development in the region: rapid growth of youthful populations; high levels of unemployment; limited markets for local produce; unsustainable levels of extraction of timber, fish and mineral resources; changing climates; and unstable governance systems in some countries.

Notwithstanding the problems of development in insular spaces, Hau'ofa (1994) claimed that Pacific peoples have demonstrated remarkable resilience in their adjustments to changes that accompanied colonial domination and eventual political independence. In many parts of the region, they have reasserted their traditional practice of moving across the ocean to work, trade, marry and live. He went on to observe:

They have since [independence] moved, by the tens of thousands, doing what their ancestors did in earlier times: enlarging their world as they go, on a scale not possible before. Everywhere they go, to Australia, New Zealand, Hawai'i, the mainland United States, Canada, Europe and elsewhere, they strike roots in new resource areas, securing employment and overseas family property, expanding kinship networks through which they circulate themselves, their relatives, their material goods, and their stories all across their ocean, and the ocean is theirs because it has always been their home (Hau'ofa 1994: 155).

## 2. Connecting worlds: Macaronesia, Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia

The International Conference, “Connecting Worlds: Emigration, Immigration and Development in Insular Spaces” addressed the following questions:

- What are the contours in the relationship between emigration and immigration in insular spaces?
- What is, or could be, the role of emigrants and their descendants in the development process?
- How can effective development strategies be implemented simultaneously in countries of origin and destination?
- Are there migration policies specific to insular spaces?
- Do common projects related with “insular integrated spaces” exist, or could they possibly come into existence, such as Macaronesia, that take migration into account?

The five island groups that comprise Macaronesia – the Azores, Madeira, Savage Island, the Canary Islands, and Cape Verde – are the Atlantic equivalent of three tropical sub-regions of islands in the Pacific Ocean – Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. All are “insular spaces” that have been defined and labelled by Europeans – the ancient Greeks in the case of Macaronesia; the early European explorers in the case of the three Pacific “nesias”. In Macaronesia, as much as in Hau’ofa’s Pacific, islanders pursue their economic and social lives in much bigger worlds than those defined by their insular spaces. As the Regional Director for Communities in the Azores, Alizra Maria Serpa Silva (2005: 25) put it in her entry in the *Azores Golden Yearbook*:

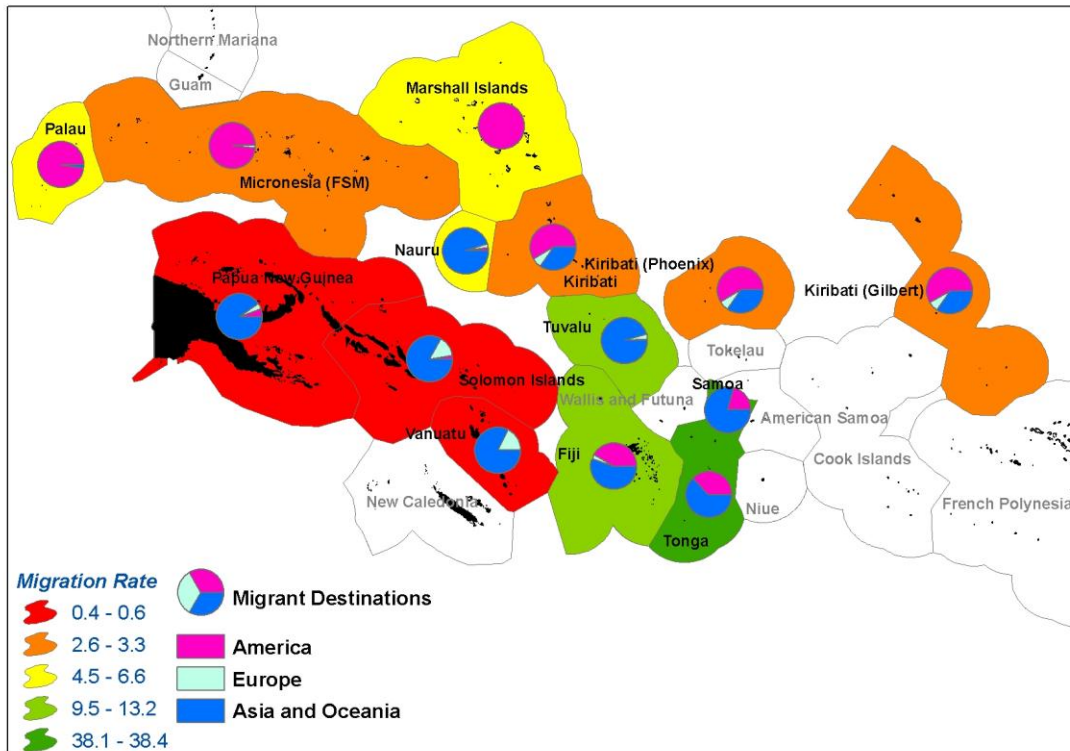
Nowadays, the Azorean communities have broadened the borders of the Azores. This region is not only the geo-social sum of its nine islands anymore. It is a complex net of communities that have established themselves all over the hemisphere, with special incidence in the enormous American continent. These communities complement the human space of the Azores and contribute to our cultural identity.

The islands in the Azores are large by Pacific standards. The combined land area of the inhabited islands is 2,342 km<sup>2</sup> and the resident population around 2006 was 238,000. Of the 22 Pacific countries and territories only 7 are as big or bigger in land area and only 5 have populations over 238,000. San Miquel, the largest island, is 759 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 130,000. Thirteen of the 22 Pacific countries have smaller land areas and populations. The Azores were uninhabited when Portuguese and others from Europe settled there from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards. All the Pacific Island groups were inhabited or claimed by indigenous populations when Europeans began settling from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, including Australia and New Zealand. This makes for very different histories and identities.

In the Pacific, the three sub-regions of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia have become associated with distinctive stories about of migration. Melanesia, which includes five independent countries (Papua New Guinea, Solomons, Vanuatu, and

Fiji) and one French colony, New Caledonia, contains around 85 percent of the island Pacific’s estimated 8.5 million people in 2008. Three of the independent countries have very limited outlets for emigration – only Fiji has an extensive diaspora, fed in recent years by a series of military coups (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Pacific migration rates around 2006 and major destinations for migrants (Gibson et al. 2007)**



Micronesia to the north has very strong links with the United States, largely due to long-standing American military interests that were furthered during a period of colonial administration following the First World War. The exceptions are Kiribati and Nauru, the two Micronesian countries that stretch south of the equator, which have been strongly linked to the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. This link came about largely as a result of the now exhausted phosphate deposits on Nauru and Ocean Island (Banaba – an island in Kiribati) that were so important for the development of the Australian and New Zealand pastoral economies.

Polynesia, to the east, has particularly strong links with New Zealand, partly through the former colonial status of some of the island groups (one continues today – the Tokelaus), partly through the actions of Christian churches and, after the Second World War, as a result of the demands for cheap unskilled labour to work in New Zealand’s primary and secondary production sectors. New Zealand’s indigenous people, the Maori, are a Polynesian people and this has been one of the foundations of New Zealand’s strong identity as “part of the Pacific”.

Such a “Pacific” identity has never been part of the Australian official discourse about its “place” in the world, especially since the independence of its former colony, Papua New Guinea, in 1975. The biggest differences in the immigration policies of Australia and New Zealand can be found in the ways they address access to work and residence by their island neighbours (Bedford *et al.* 2007). We return to these differences later in the paper – it is sufficient to note here that both Australia and New Zealand are undertaking significant reviews of their immigration policies, including policies relating to entry of Pacific peoples. Several sections of this paper have been informed by a recent review of the literature on population movement in the region that we have completed for Australia’s Department of Immigration and Citizenship and New Zealand’s Department of Labour (Hugo and Bedford 2008).

Regional approaches to economic, social and political development in the Pacific have a long history. The South Pacific Commission, set up in the late 1930s by the colonial administrations to provide them with technical advice and support, spawned several influential regional organisations, including the Pacific Islands Forum with its secretariat in Fiji. The Forum brings together annually the Heads of State of all of the independent countries in the region, including Australia and New Zealand, as well as representatives of countries that still have colonies in the region (France, the United Kingdom and the United States) and, in recent years, some of the Asian Pacific rim countries. It has developed a Pacific Plan which seeks to address a number of challenges facing the future development of the region that were identified in an inquiry by several prominent Pacific leaders in 2004. It is this inquiry that provides the point of departure for this paper on “International migration in a sea of islands: challenges and opportunities for insular Pacific spaces”.

### **3. A point of Departure**

At a special Leaders’ Retreat associated with the Pacific Islands Forum meeting in Auckland, April 2004, the following Vision was adopted to guide the Forum’s actions and policies:

Leaders believe the Pacific region can, should and will be a region of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity, so that all its people can lead free and worthwhile lives. We treasure the diversity of the Pacific and seek a future in which its cultures, traditions and religious beliefs are valued, honoured and developed. We seek a Pacific region that is respected for the quality of its governance, the sustainable management of its resources, and the full observance of democratic values, and for its defence and promotion of human rights. We seek partnerships with our neighbours and beyond to develop our knowledge, to improve our communications and to ensure a sustainable economic existence for all (Chan *et al.* 2004: 8).

Between 2004 and 2008 the Forum has had to grapple with more major challenges to “peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity” in the Pacific than at any other



time since its foundation in 1973, including another military coup in Fiji and destructive riots in the capitals of the Solomons and Tonga. A fourth coup d'état in Fiji and the devastation caused by the riots in Honiara and Nuku'alofa have contributed, collectively, to a significant shift in thinking about prospects for “development” in island countries of the Pacific. Throughout the Pacific region, including Australia and New Zealand, there has been significant political and academic debate about how to develop what Hon. Tuilaepa Sailele Aiono Malielegao (2006: vii) termed “a deeper level of regional co-operation which might lead us to a more effective degree of real integration” that can enhance economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security.

The substance of this debate about the future contours of regional co-operation can be found in a range of recent edited collections containing voices from both the islands and the Pacific rim, including Henderson and Watson's (2005) *Securing a Peaceful Pacific*; Powles' (2006) *Pacific Futures*; the World Bank's (2006) *At Home and Away: Expanding Job Opportunities for Pacific Islanders through Labour Mobility*; AustAID's (2006) *Pacific 2020: Challenges and Opportunities for Growth*; Plimmer's (2006) *The Future of the Pacific Labour Market*; Bryant-Tokelau and Frazer's (2007) *Redefining the Pacific? Regionalism Past, Present and Future*; Stahl and Appleyard's (2007) *Migration and Development in the Pacific Islands: Lessons from the New Zealand Experience* and Crocombe's (2007) *Asia in the Pacific Island: Replacing the West*.

The question about how to contribute effectively to the development of Pacific Island states has become one of the major concerns for governments in Australia and New Zealand in the early 21<sup>st</sup>. Contributing to the complexity of these debates has been the heightened concerns over security in the region since the events of September 11 2001 – concerns that have been exacerbated by the increasing interest that businesses and governments in Asia have shown in investment opportunities in Pacific resources, as well as the political stances of Pacific governments. The production and transport of drugs, money laundering, and illegal migration have added to concerns in Australia and New Zealand about some recent problems in “their” neighbourhood.<sup>3</sup>

For their part, the leaders of many Pacific states have challenged Australia and New Zealand to open up their economies and societies to greater labour migration from the islands. In this regard they have stressed the need for their southern neighbours to: “Listen to the needs and aspirations of the burgeoning population of young people in the region, and recognize the impact of bigger and more youthful populations on the resources required for education and vocational training, healthcare, and job opportunities” (Chan *et al.* 2004: 13).

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<sup>3</sup> A very useful overview of issues surrounding the concerns about border security in the Pacific can be found in Michael Moriarty's contribution to the Institute of Policy Studies' symposium *New Zealand-Pasifika: Interactions and Perspectives*. The papers prepared for this symposium can be found at <http://ips.ac.nz/events/completed-activities/Pasifika%20project/>.

#### 4. Population Growth, the “Youth Bulge” and Employment

United Nations forecasts of population growth suggest that Melanesia’s population could reach 14 million by 2050, more than double the 6.48 million estimated to be in the sub-region in 2000 (Table 1). Growth in Melanesia’s population over the next 50 years (an increase of 7.62 million) could exceed growth in the Australian population (the increase is estimated to be 7.36 million between 2000 and 2050) even though Australia’s resident population was three times the size of that in Melanesia in 2000 (Table 1). The populations of Micronesia and Polynesia will also increase significantly (from around 516,000 to 1,080,000 in the case of Micronesia, and from 590,000 to 890,000 in Polynesia) but it is the Melanesian “explosion” that is going to pose the major dilemma for politicians and planners, largely because Papua New Guinea, Solomons and Vanuatu have no migration outlets (Bedford 2005a; World Bank, 2006).

**Table 1: Pacific populations, 2000 and 2050, size and change**

|             | Population (000's) |        | Pop change (000's) |           |
|-------------|--------------------|--------|--------------------|-----------|
|             | 2000               | 2050   | 1950-2000          | 2000-2050 |
| Melanesia   | 6,480              | 14,100 | 4,370              | 7,620     |
| Micronesia  | 516                | 1,080  | 350                | 564       |
| Polynesia   | 590                | 890    | 350                | 300       |
| New Zealand | 3,780              | 5,000  | 1,870              | 1,220     |
| Australia   | 19,140             | 26,500 | 10,840             | 7,360     |

*Source:* Bedford (2005a)

For over a decade researchers have been highlighting an increasing problem of youth and adult unemployment and underemployment in many Pacific states, especially in Melanesia and Micronesia (Booth 1993; Callick 1993; Gannicott 1993; Curtain 2006). Despite some considerable potential for diversification of domestic economies, especially in the large islands comprising Papua New Guinea, Solomons, Vanuatu and Fiji, all of the recent reports on economic prospects for the Pacific highlight the problem of under- and unemployment of young people, and the potential for social unrest as a “youth bulge” increases in size and disaffection with the status quo (Ware 2004, 2005; Duncan *et al.* 2005; AusAID 2006; Booth *et al.* 2006; Dobell 2006).

Around 2006 the three Pacific island sub-regions had approximately 19 percent of their populations in the age group 15-24 years (Table 2). This compared with around 14 percent in the same age group in the populations of Australia and New Zealand. Over the period 1995-2015 the World Bank (2006a) estimated that the size of Melanesia’s population aged 15-24 could increase by around 35 percent, while the “youth bulges” in Micronesia (26 percent) and Polynesia (19 percent) grow more

slowly. However, growth in the youthful population in all three Pacific sub-regions will be much more rapid than in New Zealand and Australia (Table 2).

**Table 2: Youthful populations, 15-24 years, 2006 and percentage change 1995-2015**

|             | <b>2006<br/>(% of total)</b> | <b>1995-2015<br/>(% change)</b> |
|-------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Melansia    | 19.5                         | 34.6                            |
| Micronesia  | 18.7                         | 26.0                            |
| Polynesia   | 19.3                         | 19.2                            |
| New Zealand | 14.5                         | 16.2                            |
| Australia   | 13.6                         | 15.0                            |

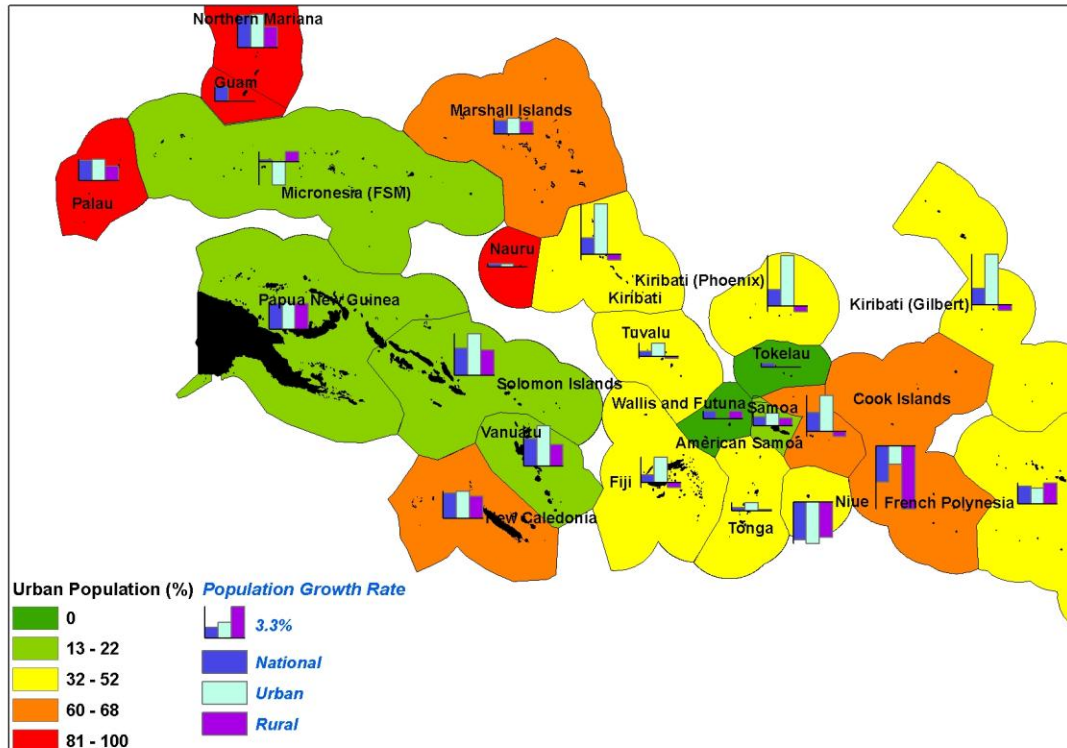
The World Bank (2006: 44), in their report *At Home and Away: Expanding Job Opportunities for Pacific Islanders through Labour Mobility*, have recently examined both the population projections and the estimates of formal sector employment growth in many of the Pacific countries. They concluded:

The results of these projections should be the least surprising but the most worrying for the Melanesian and Micronesian countries. Fertility rates are high and appear to be coming down only slowly, contributing to projected population growth of as much as 2.5 percent per annum. We have also simulated faster declines in fertility on the basis of experience elsewhere ... However, even with such accelerated declines, significant population growth will continue for many years because of the population momentum that has been built up in the Micronesian and Melanesian countries because their fertility rates have remained high while mortality rates have declined.

Formal sector employment is very low and, except for Fiji, is projected to grow very slowly. Those countries with high fertility rates and low formal sector employment will generate the most excess labour and have the greatest demand for overseas employment [Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomons, Vanuatu, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati]. The high projected levels of excess supply of labour for the formal sector indicate the enormous challenge that the Papua New Guinea and Pacific island country governments have in front of them. The other side of this coin is that in the Pacific Region there will be an increasingly larger pool of young people from which those countries with ageing populations will be able to draw.

These pessimistic assumptions about formal sector employment growth, especially in countries like Papua New Guinea, the Solomons and Vanuatu, reflect another basic characteristic of the populations of large parts of the Pacific region – the comparatively low levels of urbanisation. In Papua New Guinea, the Solomons and Vanuatu, where urban populations are growing rapidly, the great majority of people (over 80 percent in these three countries) still live in rural areas (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Share of country population in urban areas around 2006 and rural, urban and national population growth rates (Gibson et al. 2007)**



Concerns over growth in employment opportunities for young people in the Pacific Islands are not new -- providing the burgeoning youthful populations with jobs, especially jobs that generate cash incomes – has been a concern for many years. Although Figure 2 shows that for some parts of the region, especially Niue, the Cook Islands and parts of Micronesia, population growth is now negative rather than positive because of extensive emigration, in the 1960s there was an extensive debate about a “Malthusian crisis” in Polynesia. This debate is revisited briefly in the next section mainly to show that the issues that researchers and policy makers are grappling with in Melanesia in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century have been around for a long time in this part of the world.

## 5. Malthusian “crises” in the Pacific revisited

Demographers at the Australian National University were becoming concerned about a “Malthusian” crisis in the islands of the eastern and central Pacific from the late 1950s. Populations were growing rapidly as a result of high birth rates and falling

death rates, and opportunities for international migration were constrained as much by a limited range of transport services linking countries in the region as by immigration policies in different parts of the region.

### *5.1 International migration as a safety-valve in the eastern and central Pacific*

In the late 1950s and 1960s demographers such as McArthur (1961, 1964) and Borrie (1967) were arguing in favour of greater international migration as a safety valve for the burgeoning populations of Polynesia and Micronesia. Colonial governments in Fiji and the Solomons assisted by providing some outlets for Gilbertese (I-Kiribati) especially from the late 1940s, and governments in Australia and New Zealand were approached to assist with resettling people from overcrowded atolls and small islands in the central Pacific (Bedford 1968). New Zealand's major response to this debate about population pressure on small island resource bases was to resettle 1,000 people Tokelauns from their tropical coral atolls in the cool wet hills around Wellington in the 1960s.

The development of international air travel across the Pacific in the 1960s and 1970s saw the construction of airports for refuelling stop-overs in Fiji, the Cook Islands and French Polynesia. Regular air services between some of the Pacific countries and Australia, New Zealand and the United States, and the feeder services out to other Pacific countries, inevitably stimulated movement of Pacific peoples to countries on the Pacific rim. The exodus of Niueans, Cook Island Maori and later Samoans and Tongans to New Zealand and the United States essentially began in the early 1970s, following the development of international air services between island groups and with countries on the rim (Gibson 1983; Bedford 1986).

Any impending Malthusian crisis in the eastern Pacific was nipped in the bud by international migration during the 1970s. Polynesia's "youth bulges" of the 1960s were turning to "youth deficits" by the 1980s, especially in the Cook Islands and Niue where "depopulation" rather than "overpopulation" was becoming the major demographic issue (see Figure 2 – these two countries have negative population growth). In the central Pacific, I-Kiribati and Tuvaluans had access to employment in the phosphate mine on Nauru after the Ocean Island (Banaba) phosphate deposits were exhausted. The last colonial administrations in the former Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, which became the two independent countries of Kiribati and Tuvalu in the 1970s, set up a training school for merchant marine crew in Tarawa (Kiribati) and a major outlet for overseas employment was established with the German shipping line, Hamburg Sud (Borovnik 2003, 2006). Following independence Tuvalu established its own marine training school, now an important source of overseas employment.

Included in a major review of immigration policy in New Zealand in 1986 (Burke 1986) was provision for small work permit schemes with Kiribati and Tuvalu and these provided an outlet for some temporary employment, especially for Tuvaluans. However, neither of these atoll territories had outlets for permanent settlement until a

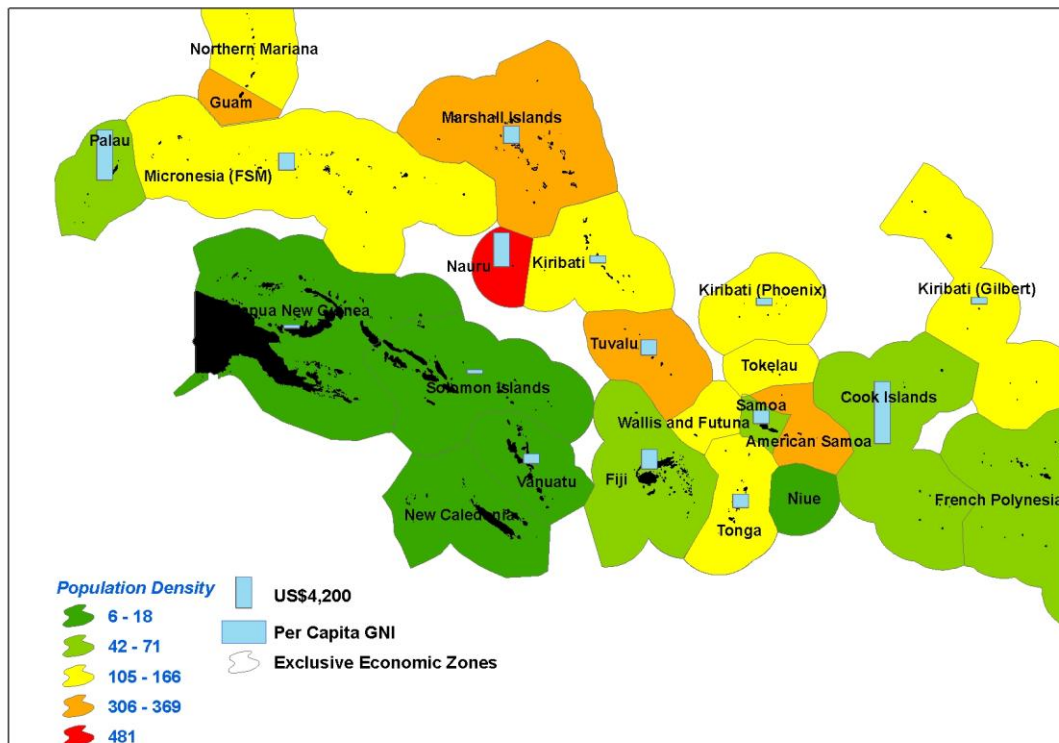
Pacific Access Category was introduced in New Zealand’s immigration policy in July 2002 for selected countries (Bedford et al. 2005, 2007).

### 5.2 Labour shortages and surpluses in the western Pacific

In the western Pacific the spectre of overcrowded islands has emerged much more recently. Indeed, the major demographic concern for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in many of the Pacific’s “big islands” was a shortage of labour for commercial agriculture, mining, extraction of timber and fishing which were seen to be the major economic opportunities for Melanesia. From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century labour has had to be recruited internationally, including from other parts of the Pacific, to work on plantations and in mineral extraction ventures. Indeed, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, competition for Melanesian labour from Australia’s sugar industry saw the largest officially sanctioned Pacific migration to that country to date.

By the late 1980s, however, high rates of natural increase in Melanesia were attracting increasing comment from demographers, especially in those countries where over 80 percent of the population still lived in rural areas. Crude population densities remained low by Pacific standards at the national level, but these mean very little in societies where access to land can bear little relationship to the size of the land-owning group (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Crude population densities around 2006 and percapita Gross National Income (Gibson et al. 2007).**



Opportunities for wage employment in rural and urban areas have not grown fast enough to absorb the demands of a rapidly growing youthful population that wanted

more than a village-based, largely subsistent lifestyle could provide. Migration in search of opportunities in towns increased rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s, but both the formal and the informal economies have been unable to provide adequate employment for the increasing numbers of job-seekers (Gannicott 1993; World Bank 2006; AusAID 2004, 2006).

Except for the French territory of New Caledonia, none of the Melanesian countries have well-established regular outlets for migrants overseas. Fiji Indians and Fijians have gradually built up quite sizeable communities in Australia and New Zealand, and these have been augmented since the late 1980s by out-migration from Fiji after periodic coup d'état. Citizens of Papua New Guinea, Solomons and Vanuatu have access to New Zealand and Australia through their official immigration programmes, but in both cases these favour skilled migrants and prioritise “economic” (employment, business) over “social” (family/humanitarian) migration. In effect there has been very limited migration to New Zealand and Australia from most of the Melanesian countries, except Fiji, via the official programmes. In the case of Fiji, it has been descendants of the Indian indentured labourers who have been most prominent in recent migration flows out of their country, especially following the series of coups from the late 1980s.

In the next section we look briefly at contemporary migration between different parts of the Pacific and Australia and New Zealand in the context of what is arguably one of the major policy challenges facing governments throughout the region as they seek common ground for a multilateral approach to meeting the the “aspirations of the burgeoning population of young people in the region” (Chan 2004). This challenge is the quite different immigration policies the two countries have had in the region, especially since the 1950s (Bedford et al. 2007).

## **6. Migration between Pacific countries and Australia and New Zealand**

It is perhaps rather ironic that the greatest differences in immigration policy between Australia and New Zealand relate to the migration of Pacific peoples. That this difference has emerged is made more surprising by the fact that mobility of Australian and New Zealand citizens between their two countries is not constrained by specific immigration policy requirements. The Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement (TTTA) allows citizens of both countries effective free entry to the other – a situation that has existed since European settlement in this part of the world from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Australia drew very heavily on the islands of the western Pacific for labour and over 60,000 Melanesians went to work in the sugar industry in Queensland. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century both Australia and New Zealand had colonies in the Pacific, but from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century Australia effectively ceased any special relationships it had with the island countries as far as immigration is concerned. New Zealand, on the other hand, has become a very significant destination for indigenous peoples of the eastern Pacific islands

(Polynesia), largely as a result of a decision taken to extend New Zealand citizenship, or some other special concessions related to access to work and residence in New Zealand, to the populations of its colonies.

As New Zealand's population of Pacific peoples has grown, increasing numbers of the latter who have obtained New Zealand citizenship have taken advantage of the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement to move to Australia. This has resulted in quite extensive growth in Australia's Pacific population – via New Zealand – a source, at times, of some tension between the two governments and for the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement (Bedford et al. 2003). Notwithstanding this growth in its Pacific population, Australia has been unwilling to establish special migration relationships with Pacific countries, given its strong and consistent policy position that citizens of all countries except New Zealand are equal under Australia's immigration policy. New Zealand, for its part, has not been prepared to trade off its long-standing migration relationships with countries like Samoa and Tonga, and its more recent small, but symbolic immigration policy links with countries like Kiribati, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu, in any more broadly-based multilateral response to development issues in the Pacific (Bedford et al. 2007).

The different approaches to immigration from countries in the Pacific region have resulted in quite different populations of Pacific peoples in Australia and New Zealand. The total Pacific-born populations in Australia (103,943) and New Zealand (134,187) at the time of their 2006 censuses were quite similar, but if the ethnic/ancestry definition of Pacific peoples is used, Australia's Pacific ancestry population (170,000) is around 60 percent the size New Zealand's ethnic Pacific population (270,000). Just over half of the latter had been born in New Zealand; the Pacific peoples are no longer predominantly a first generation immigrant population.

#### *6.1 Approvals for Residence in Australia and New Zealand, 2003-2007*

The movements of Pacific peoples into and out of New Zealand and Australia involve a complex mix of short-term visits to see family members, for education and medical treatment, for business reasons, as well as long-term moves for work, residence, return to the islands, or re-migration across the Tasman or on to North America and, less frequently, to countries in Europe and Asia. It is not possible to review all of these types of movement in this paper, but some comparative information on approvals for residence of citizens of Pacific countries in New Zealand and Australia between July 2003 and June 2007, under the skilled migrant, family, and humanitarian/other selection policies, are summarised in Tables 3-6. These tables show the volume of residential migration into Australia and New Zealand from different parts of the region, the role that citizens from a small number of countries plays in this residential mobility, and the importance of New Zealand as a destination for the larger share of most of the flows in the three broad visa approval categories.

In terms of total approvals for residence between July 2003 and June 2007, the largest flow into the two countries was from Melanesia (18,204), but almost all of this (91 percent) was from one country – Fiji (Table 3). For Australia, Melanesia was the



source of 89 percent of its Pacific citizen residence approvals over the four years, with Fiji accounting for 74 percent of the total approvals (8,757). In the case of New Zealand, the Polynesian countries of Samoa and Tonga were the source of most of their 25,497 residence approvals for Pacific citizens during the period (57 percent), and the intended destination of 74 percent of Pacific nationals seeking residence in the two countries.

**Table 3: Approvals for residence in Australia and New Zealand, Pacific citizens, July 2003-June 2007: a) All approvals**

| <b>Sub-region</b>  | <b>Australia</b> | <b>NZ</b> | <b>Total ANZ</b> | <b>% NZ</b> |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------|------------------|-------------|
| Melanesia          | 7,835            | 10,369    | 18,204           | 57.0        |
| <i>Fiji</i>        | 6,466            | 10,138    | 16,604           | 61.1        |
| <i>PNG</i>         | 1,086            | 84        | 1,170            | 7.7         |
| Micronesia         | 77               | 554       | 631              | 94.5        |
| <i>Kiribati</i>    | 19               | 521       | 540              | 96.5        |
| Polynesia          | 845              | 14,574    | 15,419           | 94.5        |
| <i>Samoa</i>       | 369              | 8,584     | 8,953            | 95.9        |
| <i>Tonga</i>       | 432              | 5,230     | 5,662            | 92.4        |
| Pacific            | 8,757            | 25,497    | 34,254           | 74.4        |
| <i>% Melanesia</i> | 89.4             | 40.7      | 53.1             |             |

*Source of data:* Unpublished tables, DIAC (Australia) and DoL (NZ)

The pattern for those in the skilled migrant category is rather different, especially for New Zealand. Melanesia, essentially Fiji, is the source of over 90 percent of approvals in the skilled migrant category in both countries (Table 4), and New Zealand is the intended place of residence for just over half (53 percent) of those approved under the skilled migrant category in both countries. Micronesia and Polynesia were the sources of very small numbers of skilled migrants, with only 264 or 6 percent of New Zealand's 4,377 approvals in this category coming from its long-standing Polynesian immigrant sources.

New Zealand's share of the skilled migrant intake from the Pacific (53 percent) is much smaller than its share of all citizens from countries in the region approved for residence (74 percent, Table 3). This reflects more the importance of New Zealand as a destination for Pacific citizens entering under the family and other categories of residence approval, rather than the fact that Australia is the preferred destination for all Pacific skilled migrants. Australia was certainly the more important intended destination for the very small number of citizens of Kiribati (45 in total) approved for entry as skilled migrants, but in the case of Polynesia, New Zealand remained the

destination for most of the skilled migrants approved from Samoa and Tonga (Table 4).

**Table 4: Approvals for residence in Australia and New Zealand, Pacific citizens, July 2003-June 2007: b) Skilled migrant categories**

| <b>Sub-region</b>  | <b>Australia</b> | <b>NZ</b> | <b>Total ANZ</b> | <b>% NZ</b> |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------|------------------|-------------|
| Melanesia          | 3,738            | 4,098     | 7,836            | 52.4        |
| <i>Fiji</i>        | 3,275            | 3,992     | 7,267            | 54.9        |
| <i>PNG</i>         | 382              | 20        | 402              | 5.0         |
| Micronesia         | 28               | 15        | 45               | 33.3        |
| <i>Kiribati</i>    | 0                | 10        | 10               | 100.0       |
| Polynesia          | 74               | 264       | 338              | 78.1        |
| <i>Samoa</i>       | 20               | 63        | 83               | 76.8        |
| <i>Tonga</i>       | 40               | 173       | 213              | 81.2        |
| Pacific            | 3,840            | 4,377     | 8,219            | 53.3        |
| <i>% Melanesia</i> | 97.3             | 93.6      | 85.3             |             |

*Source of data:* Unpublished tables, DIAC (Australia) and DoL (NZ)

In the case of approvals for residence under the family reunion (Australia) or family sponsorship (New Zealand) categories, the pattern is different again. Flows into both countries from Polynesia were much more significant than they had been for skilled migrants, especially into New Zealand (Table 5). Fiji remained the largest single country source of migrants approved for entry on family criteria indicating the importance of flows into New Zealand and Australia of Fiji Indians as well as indigenous Fijians after the civilian and military coups of 2000 and 2006 respectively. Papua New Guinea (PNG) – Australia’s former Pacific colony -- was the source of only a small number of citizens admitted for entry on family reunion grounds (554) by comparison with the numbers admitted from Fiji (2,962). New Zealand had approved only 54 applicants for entry under family sponsorship from PNG – a trivial flow from a country that now has a resident population of over 6.5 million.

The much larger numbers from Samoa and Tonga admitted for residence in New Zealand in the family sponsorship category are a reflection of the long-established movement of citizens from these countries and the sizeable communities of Samoans and Tongans in New Zealand. The great majority (91 percent) of Polynesians who gained approval under the family categories were heading for New Zealand, as were just over three quarters of the small number of Kiribati citizens (83) approved for residence on the basis of family connections in the two countries (Table 5).

**Table 5: Approvals for residence in Australia and New Zealand, Pacific citizens, July 2003-June 2007: b) Family categories**

| <b>Sub-region</b>  | <b>Australia</b> | <b>NZ</b> | <b>Total ANZ</b> | <b>% NZ</b> |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------|------------------|-------------|
| Melanesia          | 3,683            | 4,390     | 8,073            | 54.3        |
| <i>Fiji</i>        | 2,962            | 4,281     | 7,243            | 59.1        |
| <i>PNG</i>         | 554              | 54        | 608              | 8.9         |
| Micronesia         | 40               | 79        | 119              | 66.4        |
| <i>Kiribati</i>    | 19               | 64        | 83               | 77.1        |
| Polynesia          | 501              | 5,549     | 6,050            | 91.7        |
| <i>Samoa</i>       | 130              | 3,127     | 3,257            | 96.0        |
| <i>Tonga</i>       | 364              | 2,194     | 2,558            | 85.8        |
| Pacific            | 4,224            | 10,018    | 14,242           | 70.3        |
| <i>% Melanesia</i> | 87.2             | 43.8      | 56.7             |             |

*Source of data:* Unpublished tables, DIAC (Australia) and DoL (NZ)

The final table in the residence approval series shows the number of Pacific citizens who were approved under humanitarian and special programme criteria, such as New Zealand's long-standing Samoan Quota (up to 1,100 approvals a year for employment if Samoan applicants can prove they have a job) and the more recent Pacific Access Category (PAC) that allows for small quotas of citizens from Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati and Tuvalu (as well as Fiji before the 2006 military coup), selected through a lottery system, to be approved for residence in New Zealand. The operation of the Samoan Quota and the PAC have been described in Bedford et al. (2005 and 2007).

It is clear from Table 6 that New Zealand approves far more Pacific citizens for entry under these "other categories" than Australia allows in outside of the skilled migrant and family reunion categories, except for the small number of people entering from PNG. Indeed, New Zealand had a larger number of approvals during the period under "other categories" (11,102) than it did under family sponsorship (10,018) or the skilled migrant category (4,377) (Tables 4-6). Polynesia was by far the most significant source of "other category" approvals in New Zealand – only 17 percent were citizens of Melanesian countries, and almost all were from Fiji (Table 6). The 460 approved from Micronesia (almost all from Kiribati) dwarfed the very small numbers admitted in the skilled migrant and family categories (94 in total), a clear indication of the importance of the Pacific Access Category for residence approvals from this part of the Pacific. The Kiribati approvals for residence in New Zealand exceeded any single country approvals for residence in Australia under the "other categories" (Table 6). It is around the special provisions New Zealand has made for entry of Pacific citizens from a selected number of countries that we find the

differences in immigration policy in Australia and New Zealand relating to the Pacific reflected most clearly.

**Table 6: Approvals for residence in Australia and New Zealand, Pacific citizens, July 2003-June 2007: b) Other categories**

| <b>Sub-region</b>  | <b>Australia</b> | <b>NZ</b> | <b>Total ANZ</b> | <b>% NZ</b> |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------|------------------|-------------|
| Melanesia          | 414              | 1,881     | 2,295            | 82.0        |
| <i>Fiji</i>        | 229              | 1,865     | 2,094            | 80.5        |
| <i>PNG</i>         | 149              | 10        | 159              | 6.3         |
| Micronesia         | 9                | 460       | 469              | 98.1        |
| <i>Kiribati</i>    | 0                | 447       | 447              | 100.0       |
| Polynesia          | 270              | 8,761     | 9,031            | 97.0        |
| <i>Samoa</i>       | 219              | 5,394     | 5,613            | 96.1        |
| <i>Tonga</i>       | 28               | 2,863     | 2,891            | 99.0        |
| Pacific            | 693              | 11,102    | 11,795           | 94.1        |
| <i>% Melanesia</i> | 59.7             | 16.9      | 19.5             |             |

*Source of data:* Unpublished tables, DIAC (Australia) and DoL (NZ)

### 6.2: Arrivals and departures, New Zealand

The data on residence approvals relates to only one component of the migration between Pacific countries and Australia and New Zealand. There is a wealth of information available from arrival/departure statistics for the two destination countries that, arguably, have the best data anywhere in the world on flows of people across their international boundaries. A comprehensive assessment of population flows of Pacific peoples to and from New Zealand is available in Bedford (2007).

One summary table from the latter report gives a better idea of the total volume of movement of Pacific citizens into and out of New Zealand over the past 20 years – in the five years between April 2001 and March 2006 the equivalent of the total population of all the Polynesian countries entered and left New Zealand (Table 7). This was more than three times the numbers entering and leaving the country 20 years earlier in the early 1980s. The figures in Table 7 refer to all movements (short-term as well as long-term) of *citizens* of Pacific countries. If all the people who had been *born* in Pacific countries are included (including those who are New Zealand citizens and therefore not included in Table 7) the numbers entering and leaving New Zealand are much greater, reaching over 800,000 for arrivals in the five years between July 2001 and June 2006, compared with 370,000 Pacific citizens who arrived during the same period (Table 8).

**Table 7: Arrivals and departures, citizens of Pacific countries, 1982-2006**

| <b>Period<br/>(March years)</b> | <b>Polynesia</b> | <b>Melanesia</b> | <b>Micronesia</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|---------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| <i>Arrivals</i>                 |                  |                  |                   |              |
| 1982-86                         | 79383            | 34610            | 1106              | 115099       |
| 1987-91                         | 126822           | 71283            | 2793              | 200898       |
| 1992-96                         | 112195           | 88456            | 3700              | 204351       |
| 1997-01                         | 167734           | 115591           | 4514              | 287839       |
| 2002-06                         | 196041           | 163051           | 4176              | 363268       |
| 1982-06                         | 682175           | 472991           | 16289             | 1171455      |
| <i>Departures</i>               |                  |                  |                   |              |
| 1982-86                         | 68338            | 32981            | 1071              | 102390       |
| 1987-91                         | 109101           | 59914            | 2651              | 171666       |
| 1992-96                         | 109300           | 83898            | 3655              | 196853       |
| 1997-01                         | 146967           | 104542           | 4117              | 255626       |
| 2002-06                         | 186481           | 150958           | 3848              | 341287       |
| 1982-06                         | 620187           | 432293           | 15342             | 1067822      |

*Note:* Excluding people travelling on NZ, French and American passports

There is also a third definition of Pacific migration that is possible using New Zealand's (and Australia's) arrival and departure data, and that is on the basis of the countries where people were last resident (arrivals) or where they will next be resident (departures) for 12 months or more. The numbers of short-term and permanent and long-term migrants who had Pacific countries as their countries of last/next permanent residence (CL/NPR) are also larger than the numbers of Pacific citizens entering and leaving New Zealand, but smaller than the numbers born in the Pacific (Table 8).

This is not the place for an extended discussion of the different Pacific migrant universes – the story quickly gets quite complicated given the variations in the flows. The important point to take away from this brief introduction to the approvals and the arrival/departure data is that flows of Pacific people, however, defined, are substantial, and they have not been diminishing in recent years. The evidence is clear from all of the main sources of information on international migration that citizens of Pacific countries are coming to and going from New Zealand in unprecedented numbers.

**Table 8: Different Pacific arrival/departure populations, July 2001-June 2006**

| Sub-region            | Arrivals    |            |        | Departures  |            |        |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------|--------|-------------|------------|--------|
|                       | Citizenship | Birthplace | CL/NPR | Citizenship | Birthplace | CL/NPR |
| <i>PLT movement</i>   |             |            |        |             |            |        |
| Polynesia             | 8283        | 12738      | 12684  | 2717        | 8280       | 6229   |
| Melanesia             | 12557       | 13478      | 13901  | 1906        | 3623       | 3027   |
| Micronesia            | 189         | 244        | 361    | 160         | 204        | 233    |
| Pacific               | 21029       | 26460      | 26946  | 4783        | 12107      | 9489   |
| <i>ST movement</i>    |             |            |        |             |            |        |
| Polynesia             | 192247      | 481798     | 276653 | 185223      | 480024     | 265395 |
| Melanesia             | 152822      | 302092     | 154948 | 152505      | 300493     | 147559 |
| Micronesia            | 3951        | 5435       | 4404   | 3512        | 5097       | 3796   |
| Pacific               | 349020      | 789325     | 436005 | 341240      | 785614     | 416750 |
| <i>Total movement</i> |             |            |        |             |            |        |
| Polynesia             | 200530      | 494536     | 289337 | 187940      | 488304     | 271624 |
| Melanesia             | 165379      | 315570     | 168849 | 154411      | 304116     | 150586 |
| Micronesia            | 4140        | 5679       | 4765   | 3672        | 5301       | 4029   |
| Pacific               | 370049      | 815785     | 462951 | 346023      | 797721     | 426239 |

The largest flows continue to be between island countries in Polynesia and New Zealand, accounting for 54 percent of the 363,268 arrivals and 58 percent of the 341,287 departures of Pacific citizens between March 2001 and March 2006 (Table 7). However, the Melanesian component of the flow, which remains very heavily dominated by population movement between Fiji and New Zealand, has increased significantly in its share of the total since the early 1980s. In the five years between March 1981 and March 1986 arrivals and departures of citizens of countries in Melanesia accounted for 30 percent and 32 percent respectively of the total Pacific citizen flows for the period. In the latest intercensal period (2001-06) these shares of arrivals and departures from Melanesia had increased to 45 percent and 44 percent respectively. The Micronesian component of the flows shown in Table 7 was just over 1 percent of arrivals and departures between 2001 and 2006 -- only marginally larger than the share of citizens from this part of the Pacific moving between the islands and New Zealand in the early 1980s.

As noted earlier, a comprehensive analysis of the arrival/departure data and the information on residence approvals, as these relate to movements of Pacific peoples, can be found in Bedford (2007). Discussion now turns to one of the issues that has not been well researched on Pacific migration – the movement of Pacific peoples back to their island countries after periods of residence overseas – the issue of return migration. Given that large shares of Polynesians especially are now living outside the islands they call their traditional “homes, it seems that much of the re-migration that is suggested in departure data for Pacific citizens leaving New Zealand is in fact not long-term return migration to the islands. Much of it represents either movement onto a third country (Australia and the United States are the two most common destinations) or circular movement back to islands and then return to New Zealand. Some of the evidence on return migration is summarised in the next section.

## **7. Return to the islands – Myth or Reality?**

Migration back to island homes from cities in New Zealand, Australia and the United States has not been researched in depth. There is a considerable speculation about the extent of return but few detailed studies of those who have made the decision to go back to their island ‘homes’ with the intention of residing there. Yet, as the extensive research on the determinants of remittances shows, an intention to return ‘home’ at some stage in the future seems to be one of the most important reasons given by migrants working overseas for sending money and goods back to kin in the islands (Connell and Brown 1995).

### *7.1 Subsequent mobility of Pacific immigrants, 1998-2004*

The Department of Labour in New Zealand has carried out an innovative exploration of the subsequent movements of people approved for residence between 1998 and 2004, after they arrived to take up residence in New Zealand (Shorland 2006). The analysis involved producing a history of all the movements by migrants approved for residence between January 1998 and December 2004, who took up residence in the country during this period. A total of 257,230 migrants had residence applications approved and took up residence, including 36,585 citizens of Pacific countries (14 per cent of the total) (Table 9). Almost two-thirds of all migrants (65 per cent) and a slightly smaller percentage of Pacific citizens (60 per cent) had made at least one move out of the country since taking up residence. However, the majority (56 per cent of all migrants and 62 per cent of Pacific citizens) had made a small number of subsequent moves (between 1 and 4); only 8 per cent had moved in and out of the country more than 5 times (Table 9).

There are some differences in subsequent movement behaviour by migrants from the different Pacific sub-regions. The Melanesian countries generally had lower proportions in the “never moved” overseas since arrival category (23 per cent) and a significantly higher proportion in the “moved 5 or more times” category (13 per cent). Fiji’s overwhelming dominance of the migration figures clearly determines the Melanesian pattern, but the percentages for “never moved” and “moved 5+ times” are quite similar for migrants from Papua New Guinea (Table 9).

**Table 9: Subsequent mobility of Pacific citizens approved for residence between Jan 1998 and Dec 2004 who arrived during that period**

| <b>Sub-region</b>     | <b>Arrived 98-04</b> | <b>Never moved</b> | <b>Moved 1-4 times</b> | <b>Moved 5+ times</b> | <b>% never moved</b> | <b>% moved 5+ times</b> |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Melanesia             | 15,786               | 3,685              | 10,050                 | 2,051                 | 23.3                 | 13.0                    |
| <i>Fiji</i>           | <i>15,353</i>        | <i>3,599</i>       | <i>9,913</i>           | <i>2,023</i>          | <i>23.1</i>          | <i>13.0</i>             |
| <i>PNG</i>            | <i>109</i>           | <i>37</i>          | <i>61</i>              | <i>11</i>             | <i>33.9</i>          | <i>10.1</i>             |
| Micronesia            | 232                  | 159                | 64                     | 9                     | 68.5                 | 3.9                     |
| <i>Kiribati</i>       | <i>187</i>           | <i>138</i>         | <i>45</i>              | <i>4</i>              | <i>73.8</i>          | <i>2.1</i>              |
| Polynesia             | 20,567               | 10,744             | 8,799                  | 1,024                 | 52.2                 | 5.0                     |
| <i>Samoa</i>          | <i>12,232</i>        | <i>6,720</i>       | <i>4,997</i>           | <i>515</i>            | <i>54.9</i>          | <i>4.2</i>              |
| <i>Tonga</i>          | <i>7,770</i>         | <i>3,541</i>       | <i>3,656</i>           | <i>503</i>            | <i>46.0</i>          | <i>6.5</i>              |
| Pacific All countries | 36,585               | 14,588             | 18,913                 | 3,084                 | 39.9                 | 8.4                     |
| <i>% Pacific</i>      | <i>257,230</i>       | <i>90,288</i>      | <i>144,564</i>         | <i>22,378</i>         | <i>35.1</i>          | <i>8.7</i>              |
|                       | <i>14.2</i>          | <i>16.6</i>        | <i>13.1</i>            | <i>13.8</i>           |                      |                         |

In the case of Polynesia, migrants from Samoa and Tonga were less mobile than those from Fiji after settling in New Zealand, but more mobile than their counterparts from more distant Polynesian countries. Proximity to New Zealand, and ease of travel to and from the country clearly has some impact on the subsequent movement of recent migrants. In the case of Kiribati, for example, over 70 percent of their citizens who had taken up residence between January 1998 and December 2004 had not been out of New Zealand again (Table 9). This is a much higher proportion than is found for Samoa and Tonga, and more than three times the Melanesian average of 23 percent.

There is quite a bit more data on length of spells overseas, proportions of time spent outside New Zealand since arriving, and the proportions of the migrants approved for residence who had been absent for 6 months or more at the end of the observation period (December 2004). Information these dimensions of subsequent mobility can be found in Bedford (2007). It can be noted here, by way of conclusion to this brief comment on these data on subsequent mobility, that citizens of Samoa are much more likely to be overseas for lengthy periods, especially those approved in the skilled and business categories (26 percent), than those from Tonga (5 percent) or Fiji (7 percent). They also have much higher shares of migrants in the long-term absent category who had been approved under the family sponsorship and international/humanitarian categories than Tonga or Fiji. Samoans are thus more likely to be away for longer periods than Tongans and Fiji citizens, although the latter



have larger shares of their movers in the “moved 5+ times” category (Table 9). The data on subsequent mobility of Pacific citizens approved for residence in New Zealand in recent years suggest that migrants from Fiji and Tonga are more frequent circulators between the islands and their new homes.

### 7.2 *The promise and experience of return*

When household surveys seeking information on mobility behaviour have been carried out among Samoans, Tongans, Fijians and other Pacific Island peoples resident in cities such as Auckland, Hamilton, Sydney and Brisbane, it is often found that most of the migrant adults have been ‘home’ at least once since arrival, and there are plans to take their children to the islands at some stage (this statement is based on findings from a number of unpublished graduate research reports. See for example: Fuka 1985, Tongamoa 1987, Fauolo 1993, Liki 1994, Stanwix 1994, Mangnell 2004). The return trips have tended to be visits, rather than migration back to live in the village.

However, similar types of surveys in villages in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau reveal that many adults, especially men, have lived and worked overseas at some stage in the past (see, for example, Hooper 1982 and 1993, Bedford 1985 and 1988, Matheson 1986, Douglas 1987, Underhill 1989, James 1991 and 1993, Felgentreff 1996, Connell 2006). It is clear from retrospective mobility histories collected in homes in both the islands and on the Pacific rim that international population circulation is a very common process, and there are several bases from which this circulation emanates. These bases may change for particular individuals and families at different stages of their lives.

A recent study of Niuean retirees by Mangnall (2004) has confirmed that even with pension portability few are likely to return from New Zealand to live permanently on Niue. On the basis of a series of in-depth interviews with a group of long-established Niuean residents in New Zealand she suggests that ‘return to live’ is not likely to be as common as was earlier assumed by those favouring pension portability. More likely will be a dual residence strategy – residence for part of the year in Niue and part of the year in New Zealand – or more frequent circulation from a New Zealand base. One of the things that will prompt this more frequent circulation is a resurgence of interest amongst Niueans living in New Zealand in connecting with the place that is central to their cultural identity: the Rock of Polynesia (Bedford et al. 2006). Mangnall (2004: 93) observes with regard to the Niueans she interviewed:

Participants saw their role in retirement as ensuring the survival of Niuean culture in Auckland across the generations and the survival of Niue as their homeland. They combined both goals through visiting and retiring to live on Niue. Their various returns gave them personal enjoyment, maintained family ties to their homeland and contributed to Niue’s development through spending their superannuation and by attracting younger generations or future repopulation.

Results from field research on return migration by Liava'a (2007) in Tonga in December 2006 show that long-established New Zealand residents, with years of work experience in that country, can successfully adapt back into a Tongan way of life, especially if there are opportunities to create a successful business linked with primary production in the islands. The four most important reasons for returning to Tonga to live were: family reunification (65 percent), a sense of Tonga as 'home' (54 percent), availability of suitable employment (54 percent) and availability of land (46 percent). Retirement was not an important factor motivating return amongst this group (only 15 percent said it was 'very important'). The three greatest challenges that the returnees faced were 'adapting to Tongan culture' (88 percent), 'miss people and places overseas' (23 percent) and 'different working environment' (19 percent). Nearly all of those interviewed intended to travel overseas again within the next 12 months.

The detailed case studies completed with some of these respondents make it clear that, notwithstanding the tensions surrounding the riots in December 2006, Tonga remains an attractive place of residence for Tongans who can obtain a good government or private sector job, or who can access sufficient land to create a successful commercial enterprise. For these people, New Zealand becomes the place they visit; Tonga is their 'home'. Successful return does occur, but it is difficult to get a meaningful estimate of the magnitude of this process. In a sense it is not really important to try and prove that return is "permanent" or "lasting". As Connell (1994: 277) reminds us: "Migration is rarely absolute, unambivalent or final; it is not a cause and consequence of a definite break with a cultural life that is part of history, but a partial and conditional state, characterised by ambiguity and indeterminacy. ... Uncertainty defines the experience of migration, even in second generations".

### 7.3 *The ambiguity of migration*

Persistence of the ideology of return is, as Connell (1994, 1997) points out, just one means of bridging and welding together many different lifestyles and opportunities. Over the past three decades, the diversity of lifestyles experienced by Pacific migrants in cities in New Zealand, Australia and North America especially, as well as in the islands, has required inevitable acceptance of culture clashes, discrimination and disappointment, notwithstanding the fact that there will always be some individuals who move more easily between societies, especially those sheltered in the confines of transnational families (Connell 1994). Much more cosmopolitan populations of Samoans, Tongans, Cook Islanders, Niueans, Tokelauans, and Fijians now inhabit both the villages in the islands and the cities on the Pacific rim than was the case in the 1960s and 1970s when the most recent Pacific diaspora commenced. These people are much more at ease with the multiple identities that are required to cope effectively with living in many locations.

Ambivalence about life in a Pacific rim city and life in the islands remains the norm for most Pacific migrants, and for many of their children living overseas. Macpherson (1997: 95) talks of new Pan-Pacific identities beginning to emerge amongst the second generation, "in the social space between their parent's Pacific

Island societies and the predominantly European or Pakeha society. .... Known to themselves variously as the ‘PIs’ or ‘Polys’ or ‘NZ-borns’, this group is creating a new social space in which elements of their parents’ culture and society are combined with elements of others found in the city to produce a new patois, new music, new fashion, new customs and practices which mark their distinctiveness”.

In a genre of writing that has become very popular in the migration literature in recent years, which invokes a dialectic “where journeys have many meanings, many endings and much inbetweenness” (Connell 1997: 217), it is appropriate to return to Hau’ofa’s (1994: 160) claim that there are thousands of citizens of Pacific countries “flying back and forth across national boundaries, the International Dateline, the Equator, far above and undaunted by the really serious discourses below on the nature of the Pacific Century, the Asia/Pacific co-prosperity sphere, and the dispositions of the post-cold war Pacific Rim, cultivating their ever growing universe in their own ways, which is as it should be, for therein lies their independence”. Increasing numbers of Pacific citizens will continue to enter and leave New Zealand, Australia and the islands, new transnational identities will continue to evolve, and, within these identities there will continue to be an acknowledgement of a homeland in the islands. As Ward (1997: 180) reminds us, echoing Hau’ofa’s and Macpherson’s views about the interconnectedness of peoples and places in the Pacific region, “these transnational linkages ... may give us clues to the future socio-cultural developments and networks in other parts of the world as people everywhere become more mobile and migration does not carry the old implication of almost complete social and economic separation at the household level”.

#### *7.4 Towards a new Pacific population concept*

The frequent reference made to the maintenance of connections between people and places through physical mobility suggests that it is appropriate to explore alternative conceptions of the populations of places that have significant diaspora. In the case of the Pacific, this applies especially to Polynesia, and the remarks in this section relate specifically to the Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tonga. The Pacific populations, both in these islands and in New Zealand, contain large proportions of people who have lived in villages or small towns in Polynesia as well as in cities on the Pacific rim. The island-resident and the New Zealand-resident populations at any one time (such as a census) contain a mix of people who have been resident in both places at different times during the preceding few years. They are not discrete populations in the sense of one being just island-based residents, and the other just New Zealand-based residents. They are both relatively fluid populations in terms of the mobility between the islands and New Zealand.

In order to capture the essence of this fluidity it is useful to consider the concept of an “effective” population – the population at any one time that draws on the basic services and facilities (water, sewerage, commercial enterprises, accommodation, health services, employment etc) in a place (Bedford et al. 2006). The “effective” population is larger than either the de facto population (the population in a place on census night, excluding absentees but including visitors) or the de jure population

(the usually resident population which excludes temporary visitors, but includes those temporarily absent who usually live in the place). Where there are high levels of circulation of people between places, the effective population includes a share of those who move in and out of a place on a temporary basis, as well as those who usually live there. In the Polynesian context, it is a population that captures a part of the diaspora of Cook Islanders, Niueans, Samoans and Tongans and includes these people in the island-based population because there is always some movement through the island of kin as visitors and tourists, placing demands on island-based services and facilities, and actually being an essential part of the community through the year.

The concept of an “effective population” is a difficult one to operationalise because it requires information on the de facto population, those temporarily absent from the island, a small share of the diaspora, and the likely other visitors to the island through the year. However, in the light of the extensive mobility of Cook Islanders, Niueans, Samoans and Tongans between the islands and New Zealand, and the very sizeable diaspora for all four Pacific populations on the Pacific rim, further exploration of the concept of “effective” populations for island countries is warranted especially in the light of questions that are being asked about the “viability” of some of the smaller resident populations in the context of enduring sustainable development. “Effective” populations may be a better measure of some dimensions of “viability” of small island states than the resident populations identified in censuses.

## **8. Looking ahead: diverse Pacific mobility contexts**

This paper has touched on several aspects of the contemporary mobility of Pacific peoples. Inevitably the treatment of the literature has been selective and rather brief. However, it is clear that there are in effect two Pacifics when it comes to international population movement in the region: one where the potential for movement beyond national boundaries is very restricted, and one where there has been considerable potential for movement offshore, especially to New Zealand and the United States. In the case of the former islands, the contemporary debate about international migration tends to be couched in terms of problems of “youth bulges”, high levels of unemployment, and the prospect of considerable social tension and unrest unless outlets for employment are found. In the countries with outlets, the contemporary debate hinges more around the way transnational families and communities exchange resources and human capital, questions about return migration and, for a small number of countries, problems of depopulation.

There is much more diversity in both the patterns of contemporary mobility and the causes and consequences of movement for the communities of origin and destination than this brief overview has been able to acknowledge. There are small but important exchanges of skilled Pacific labour between countries in the region. There are some quite distinctive country-specific flows: the long-established movement of Fiji military and security personnel to the Middle East; the flows of labour between the French-administered territories of French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna and New

Caledonia; the growing exchanges of people between countries in Asia and the Pacific (Crocombe 2007). The Pacific has been an important “neighbourhood” for Japanese and Koreans seeking fish, Malaysians and Taiwanese seeking timber, Chinese seeking beche de mer, Filipinos seeking work. The people flows associated with these activities are not given nearly as much attention as those that link the islands with their southern neighbours, and the west coast of North America.

In explaining recent changes and emerging challenges it is useful to highlight a number of themes that have relevance for understanding on-going developments in Pacific mobility:

1. Increasing divergence in living standards between elites and the less privileged in all Pacific countries, and an associated widening gap in opportunities for migration between countries for these groups. This trend was identified by Hau’ofa (1987) when he referred to the deepening disparities in income and opportunity between the urban-based Pacific elites and the majority of Pacific Islanders who remained dependent on a subsistence-based village economy. Widening income inequalities was the subject of considerable debate in New Zealand and Australia during the 1990s, especially in the context of the effects of globalisation on host and immigrant populations. The neo-liberal economic restructuring program that was introduced in New Zealand in 1984, and enforced on some Pacific Island governments by international aid donors in the 1990s, had a profound impact on employment prospects in the civil service (a major employer in most Pacific countries) and in the manufacturing sector (especially in New Zealand) as flows of commodities, capital and labour were freed from government regulation (Bedford 2004).
2. The growing emphasis on immigration of people who are either highly skilled and/or have capital for investment in business development (Bedford 2006). Associated with this has been increasing use of contract labour to meet particular skill shortages in the labour market. Temporary migration, as distinct from residential or “permanent” migration, has become a much more obvious focus of immigration policy and component of population flows into Australia and New Zealand since the late 1990s than it was in the migration system that prevailed through most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the Pacific Islands, contract employment of skilled labour, especially from Australia and New Zealand, has gained considerable impetus from the “sharing of resources of governance” that has been associated with the response to political crisis in the Solomon Islands.
3. A concern by governments throughout the region to strengthen connections with countries both within the region as well as on the Asia-Pacific rim, especially with a view to gaining better access to markets, capital, labour, students and tourists (Bedford 2005b). There are two dimensions to this strengthening of economic connections: the first involves agreements within

the region, such as Closer Economic Relations (CER) and the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement (SPARTECA). The second is associated with the drive to be “part of Asia”, especially by successive governments in Australia. A defining dimension of the Pacific regional migration system since the late 1980s has been the tendency to look outside rather than within the system for opportunity and advantage. It has taken a combination of the collapse of civil order in the Solomon Islands, the Bail bombings, and Australia’s “Pacific solution” to a short-lived boat people crisis to bring the Pacific Islands back into very sharp focus for both the Australian and the New Zealand governments.

4. Associated with the third point is the massive increase in Chinese involvement in the Pacific. The last decade has seen an exponential increase in the presence of Chinese as well as their involvement in the economies and societies of the region. As Ron Crocombe (2007) demonstrates in considerable detail in his recent book *Asia in the Pacific Islands. Replacing the West* there has a significant shift in the balance of power of foreign nations in the region following the attainment of political independence. Competition is strong between Asian states for access to marine, mineral and forestry resources, for investment opportunities in land and industry, and for the votes of island nations in international agencies where numbers of countries rather than population sizes count for votes. As Crocombe (2007: 467) notes, “China is laying the foundations for greatly enhanced influence and power”. Its first priority is to grow its economy and undermine the influence of its competitors in the islands – Australia, the USA, Japan and Taiwan. However, as Crocombe (2007:467) goes on to point out, “The contrast between its official declarations about being a benefactor and the destructive criminal activities of its nationals, casts China’s strategic interest in the region in a less flattering light. China’s efforts to stop crimes by its nationals seem nominal at best”.
5. Increased official acknowledgement of the transnational dimensions of populations in the region, especially Pacific Islanders and Asians in New Zealand and Australia, and New Zealanders and Australians overseas. This acknowledgement was seen very clearly at the “Pacific Vision” Conference in Auckland in 1999 where a strategy for developing New Zealand’s Pacific communities was articulated by the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, the “Knowledge Wave” conference in Auckland in 2001 where some attention was focussed for the first time on the New Zealand “diaspora”, and the interest the Australian government has shown in understanding better the movements of Australians out of and back to their country. A comprehensive study of the migration of Australians by Hugo, Rudd and Harris (2003) and Hugo (2005, 2006a, 2006b) made an important contribution to understanding the Australian “diaspora”.

6. Related to the desire to know more about transnational dimensions of populations, is the growing importance of research on return migration to countries in the regional migration system. Underpinning this movement are changing patterns of labour market demand; the ageing of the Pacific, Asian, New Zealand and Australian diaspora; changes in arrangements for welfare entitlements and the portability of superannuation. With regard to the issue of welfare entitlements, there have been some significant policy shifts in recent years that have implications for return migration. Since March 2001 New Zealanders taking up residence in Australia have had to meet the requirements of Australia's immigration program if they wished to be eligible for most employment-related social security benefits (Birrell and Rapson 2002; Bedford et al. 2003). This has resulted in the return to New Zealand of some migrants who would otherwise have chosen to stay in Australia (Sanderson 2006; Poot and Sanderson 2007). In the case of Pacific Islanders in New Zealand, a change to superannuation provisions in 1997 permits those eligible for state-funded pensions in New Zealand to uplift their entitlements while resident in the islands. This has encouraged some first generation Pacific migrants to return to the islands on their retirement, especially if they have been retaining strong connections with their kin there while they have been working in New Zealand.
7. Climate change issues have become an increasingly important consideration in the Pacific (Barnett 2001; Barnett and Adger 2003; Connell 2003; Church et al. 2006). While it is apparent that the possible effects of sea level rise have been misrepresented in much media and local discussions of the issue it is an important part of the mix of forces likely to impact on future migration (Farbotko 2005). It is clear that the discourse on climate change impacts in the region needs to be more nuanced and better informed but environmental pressures on populations in atoll countries are likely to increase. Migration should not, however, be seen as the only solution and allowed to totally divert attention away from mitigation and adaptation strategies and investments which, along with environmental migration, should comprise a comprehensive climate change strategy in the region.
8. There is a global concern with linkages between population mobility and the spread of HIV-AIDS (Hugo, forthcoming). While the prevalence of HIV infection is higher among migrants than non-migrants in much of the world, the evidence is that it is more that migrants find themselves in high risk situations than non-migrants than the simple fact that they are migrants which is the important consideration. The fact that migrants often are young, single, separated from family, often cashed up and there is a strong linkage between the commercial sex industry and concentrations of migrants means that migrants are often placed in situations where they are at risk of infection through unprotected sex or needle sharing in drug taking. It is relevant that in Indonesia the highest prevalence of infection is in West Papua province with

similar mobility and cultural situation to that prevailing in Papua New Guinea (Hugo 2001).

9. Two other contextual factors need to be mentioned. In the last decade there has been a sharpened awareness of the complex relationship between mobility and two areas of key importance in the region – economic and social development on the one hand and national and regional security on the other. This interest has been sharpened in the case of the latter by events such as 9/11 and the Bali bombing, while the former has become a major focus of multilateral development assistance agencies, especially the World Bank (2006b), Asian Development Bank (2004), United Nations (2006) and DFID (House of Commons 2004; DFID 2007). The focus of new interest in the migration and development relationship has been a shift in global discourse which concentrated almost entirely on ‘brain drain’ losses of human capital caused by emigration of skilled people from low income countries to considerations of the positive effects that migration can and does have on origin nations. As the former Secretary General of the United Nations put it:

The potential for migrants to help transform their native countries has captured the imaginations of national and local authorities, international institutions and the private sector. There is an emerging consensus that countries can co-operate to create triple wins, for migrants, for their countries of origin and for the societies that receive them (United Nations 2006: 5).

This shift in the discourse about migration and development has seen renewed activity, both within the Pacific and outside of the region, on the potential positive benefits to be gained from migration for poverty reduction and betterment of the lives of people. An example of this is the recent development of a seasonal labour migration scheme involving labour from several Pacific countries working in the horticultural and viticulture industries in New Zealand – a scheme that seeks to promote “triple wins” for the source communities, the migrants and the employers in New Zealand. The scheme is a deliberate response to the challenge issued by the Pacific Forum in 2004: “Listen to the needs and aspirations of the burgeoning population of young people in the region, and recognize the impact of bigger and more youthful populations on the resources required for education and vocational training, healthcare, and job opportunities.”

## **9. A Concluding Comment**

The Pacific has assumed much greater importance in the official dialogue about Australia’s and New Zealand’s regional agendas in recent years. The Pacific Plan, adopted by the Forum Leaders at their October 2005 meeting in Port Moresby, is one indication of this. In the words of the Secretary-General of the Forum’s Secretariat, Greg Unwin (2007: 14-16), the Pacific Plan “it is a new response, in its way, a quite far-sighted attempt to meet some of our common challenges in practical terms. ...



[including] some general understandings as to the movement of people around our region ... which recognise the inter-dependence of our communities.”

Unwin’s (2007: 17) remarks are highly appropriate in the context of a drive for a more obvious multilateral response to migration and development issues in the Pacific, especially when he says that what we need more than anything else is:

a final recognition by New Zealand and Australia that for them the Pacific region is special and like no other and that it is not some kind of unavoidable responsibility, but a community of which they are a part, and which their own destinies are intimately bound up with. When I say this, incidentally, I do not, for a moment, imply that New Zealand and Australia stand in the same position in relation to the Pacific region. By almost any demonstrable measure, New Zealand has accepted, to a much greater extent than Australia, that it is actually a part of the region. Given the difference between the two countries, perhaps that will always be the case and perhaps there may be advantages for all of us in that. But for both, and even if in different ways, it is a principle which needs to be etched in stone.

The Chairs of the Independent Task Force of distinguished Australians, convened by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute to consider future directions in Australia’s Pacific Islands policy, essentially agreed when they stated: “Australia has a new government. New issues, such as climate change and labour mobility, are emerging on the regional agenda. The time seems right for Australia to reconsider the way it interacts with its Pacific Island neighbours in Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia with the aim of achieving positive outcomes on all sides” (Abigail and Sinclair in Australian Strategic Policy Institute 2008).

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