



ICDP and Global Access Partners

# PACIFIC@CONNECT FORUM

**Australia-Pacific Connections for a Digital Future**

**Communiqué and Report of Proceedings**

Thursday, 6 September 2018  
Parliament House of New South Wales  
Sydney, Australia



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The International Centre for Democratic Partnerships (ICDP) and Global Access Partners (GAP), with the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), held the inaugural Pacific Connect Forum at NSW Parliament House on Thursday, 6 September 2018.

The Forum reviewed ICDP's first year of work in establishing and strengthening Australian and Pacific interpersonal relationships under the banner of *Pacific Connect* and looked forward to strengthening community links in the future.

Over 80 guests from Australia, Fiji, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu heard keynote addresses from the **Hon. Christopher Pyne MP**, Australian Minister for Defence, **Hon. Afamasaga Lepuia'i Rico Tupa'i**, Samoan Minister for Communications and Information Technology (IT), and **Michelle Rowland MP**, Australian Shadow Minister for Communications.

Delegates discussed digital connectivity as an 'enabler of opportunity' in the Pacific region and suggested ways to create a sustainable, people-centred, project-focused *Pacific Connect* community. They backed efforts to build 'One Pacific' through closer ties enabled by new submarine cables and improving mobile networks, stressed the need for inclusion for rural as well as urban dwellers, and highlighted the role technology can play in supporting traditional customs and culture.

The Forum agreed that success of the *Pacific Connect* programme could be defined in terms of progress towards a 'connected Pacific' and the improvement of Australian-Pacific connections, and saw empathy as the key to these relationships. While there is no metric to measure relationships, projects which are firmly rooted in the family culture of the South Pacific will be of the greatest benefit.

Delegates acknowledged the need for better digital literacy in the community and a balanced approach between short-term market opportunities and longer-term projects such as blockchain. Bridging the digital divide in rural Pacific populations can only be achieved through a balanced combination of suitable infrastructure, affordable access and usability. While blockchain has great potential, it is best seen as an enabler of wider goals, rather than an end in itself. Digital maturity varies across the Pacific, and it was suggested that barriers to digital engagement in individual regions and nations be assessed before blanket blockchain or other digital solutions can be adopted.

The Forum also acknowledged the need for financial literacy, better payment methods and improved access to financial services for more people in the region. While the new submarine cables will help, there will still be regions without coverage which other solutions should address.

Delegates recognised the importance of a central repository for Pacific data and supported the initiatives which aim to create digital data storages to allow decision makers and business people to access the information they need to improve their decision making.

The support of the Australian Government through scholarships to students across the Pacific was acknowledged, and delegates expressed hope that it could be extended to entrepreneurs and start-ups in PNG and the Pacific. Such support would help aspiring entrepreneurs access markets in Australia, connect with Australian tech hubs and develop talent and opportunities in the region.

The Forum included updates on the progression of projects by *Pacific Connect* Network Dialogue participants. A series of next steps for ICDP and *Pacific Connect* were outlined to continue and expand activities in the future.

The Forum agreed that Dialogue participants themselves should take responsibility for driving and financing their own projects to see them come to fruition. Awareness of other schemes and organisations, such as the existing PNG Digital ICT Cluster, is important to encourage the crosspollination of ideas and avoid duplication of effort.

At the end of the Forum, delegates enjoyed the outstanding musical performance by Tongan students of Newington College.

A range of extra-curricular activities for Pacific guests were organised by ICDP and GAP in the lead-up to the Forum, including visits to Sydney's most prominent innovation hubs – Stone & Chalk, BlueChilli and the Australian Computer Society Innovation Hub. ICDP also arranged several mentoring sessions, follow-up meetings for Dialogue participants and various project and alumni groups, and tours of academic facilities.

A number of Forum guests also attended *A Vision for Australia: GAP 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Economic Summit on Digital Trade*, held in the NSW Legislative Assembly Chamber on 7 September, and a breakfast meeting to discuss a new start-up hub in PNG. On 5 September, GAP facilitated a visit for the Pacific VIP delegation to NSW Parliament House to meet with the Hon. John Ajaka MLC, President of the NSW Legislative Council.

The Forum's outcomes and next steps for ICDP include the development of several active projects and new regional Dialogues and the building of an active *Pacific Connect* alumni community. ICDP supports the Forum's call for 'One Pacific' enabled by ever-greater digital connectivity and will look at new models of engagement, as well as existing activities, to achieve this.



*Inaugural Pacific Connect Forum, NSW Parliament House, 6 September 2018  
Photo – Will Spiers*

## Pacific Connect Forum Communiqué

1. We, the delegates of the inaugural Pacific Connect Forum, met in the Preston Stanley Room at NSW Parliament House on Thursday, 6 September 2018, at the invitation of the International Centre for Democratic Partnerships (ICDP) and Global Access Partners (GAP), with the financial support of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).
2. We congratulate Simone Pensko, Catherine Fritz-Kalish and the staff of ICDP and GAP for organising the event and the Hon. Christopher Pyne MP, Australian Minister for Defence, the Hon. Afamasaga Lepuia'i Rico Tupa'i, Samoan Minister for Communications and IT, and Michelle Rowland MP, Australian Shadow Minister for Communications, for their keynote speeches.
3. We thank Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu, Dr Ian Watt AC, Peter Kenilorea Jr and Prof Ian Young AO for their thought-provoking addresses, Andrew Carriline and Michael Collins for facilitating our discussions, and Emmanuel Narokobi, Brian Mangi and Nadia Meredith-Hunt for their updates on previous *Pacific Connect* Dialogues.
4. We welcome Australia's interest in forging stronger and more enduring strategic relationships with Pacific Island nations and see *Pacific Connect* Dialogues and the Annual Forum as an opportunity for current and emerging regional leaders to extend their networks, work on solutions to common challenges and, ultimately, develop long-term relationships through shared experiences.
5. We appreciate the opportunity to discuss the economic, social and cultural opportunities created by new submarine cables and better mobile networks across the Pacific and strongly believe that new technology can empower economic growth, cultural cohesion and community inclusion.
6. We support calls for 'One Pacific' enabled by ever-greater digital connectivity. We look forward to building and sustaining a people-centred, project-focused *Pacific Connect* community through online platforms, face-to-face events and further Dialogues. We are convinced that better interpersonal relationships between Pacific Islanders, and Australia and the Pacific as a whole, will benefit Dialogue participants and local communities.
7. We praise the efforts of the organisers and participants of previous ICDP events and trust that lessons learned from the first year of *Pacific Connect* will be factored into future activities. We hope that *Pacific Connect* will be able to unlock unused capacity and nurture the trust and empathy which underpins productive partnerships. We believe in the value of the individuals involved, rather than additional contributions to national GDP, when calculating the benefits of their interactions. While there is no metric to measure relationships, projects which are firmly rooted in the family culture of the South Pacific will be of the greatest benefit.



8. We are passionate about driving economic development, social inclusion, digital literacy and cultural understanding in Pacific Island nations and hope that improved digital connectivity will help promote and strengthen Pacific culture, education and local businesses. At the same time, we are acutely aware of many challenges which must be overcome before the Pacific is truly connected. We acknowledge the need for better digital literacy in the community and a balanced approach between short-term market opportunities and longer-term projects such as blockchain. Bridging the digital divide in rural Pacific populations can only be achieved through a balanced combination of suitable infrastructure, affordable access and usability.
9. We believe that blockchain has great potential but is best seen as an enabler of wider goals, rather than an end in itself. Digital maturity varies across the Pacific, and we suggest that barriers to digital engagement in individual regions and nations be assessed before blanket blockchain or other digital solutions can be adopted. We also suggest that end users should be engaged to discover their needs to ensure they use new services, rather than imposing complicated frameworks from above without consultation. We also need to ensure new developments are both secure and reliable.
10. We acknowledge the need for financial literacy, better payment methods and improved access to financial services for more people in the region. While the new submarine cables will help, there will still be regions without coverage which other solutions should address.
11. We recognise that there is no central repository for the data generated through research in the Pacific to be stored, analysed or assessed. We support the initiatives which aim to create digital data repositories to allow decision makers and business people to access the information they need to improve their decision making.
12. We look forward to the outcome of the business, IT and cultural projects currently under development through *Pacific Connect* and hope to participate in new activities and events. We recognise that Dialogue participants themselves should take responsibility for driving and financing their own projects to see them come to fruition. We also believe that awareness of other schemes and organisations, such as the existing PNG Digital ICT Cluster, is important to encourage the crosspollination of ideas and avoid duplication of effort.
13. We greatly enjoyed the outstanding musical performance by Tongan students of Newington College and wish them well in their further endeavours. These students exemplify the qualities and abilities of young Pacific people and inspire us to redouble our efforts to encourage the emergence and development of young leaders throughout the Pacific region.

## FORUM PROCEEDINGS

### Welcome

Delegates were thanked for attending the Forum, and **Victor Vae'au**, Co-Managing Director of Sterling Group, New Zealand, offered grace.

**Catherine Fritz-Kalish**, Director of ICDP and Co-Founder and Managing Director of GAP, acknowledged the traditional owners of the land, and introduced the first speaker, **Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu**, Special Advisor of ICDP and Consultant with Strategic Development Group, Samoa.

Ms Heather-Latu welcomed guests and speakers from the Pacific and Australia. She observed that, for all its geographic size, the Pacific is a small place in terms of tight-knit connections. She thanked the NSW Parliament for hosting the Forum and acknowledged the breadth of political, public sector and private sector participants and their potential to drive regional prosperity. She paid tribute to Millicent Preston Stanley, the first female member of the NSW Parliament, and stressed the need to share her spirit of endeavour.

### Overview of *Pacific Connect*

**Dr Ian Watt AC**, Chairman of ICDP, welcomed participants “old and new, from near and far”, as equal partners in *Pacific Connect*. The Australian Government’s 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper<sup>1</sup> emphasised the importance of the Pacific to Australia and the need for Australia to play a greater regional role. It identified three pillars of engagement – enhanced economic development and integration, better security, and closer interpersonal connections – and ICDP currently delivers the Government’s *Pacific Connect* programme to improve personal links in the region.

ICDP was established as an independent body in July 2017 and began operations on 1 October the same year after winning a tender for DFAT funding. Its objectives include building better networks in the region and shaping emerging leaders in Australia and the Pacific, not least by increasing their awareness of each other. It also encourages jobs and economic development in the Pacific and better regional economic integration with Australia and emphasises Australia’s role as a key partner to Pacific Island nations.

ICDP pursues these goals by organising Dialogues between Australians and Pacific Islanders, rather than seminars or conferences. The Dialogues follow ‘*Second Track*’<sup>2</sup> principles and are unofficial and confidential in nature, with people attending as individuals of equal status, rather than organisational representatives. A broad initial



topic is discussed and refined to produce practical projects for participants to take forward and secure funding for.

Three regional Dialogues have already been held in PNG, Fiji and Samoa, involving 72 participants, and further Dialogues are planned in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Tonga. The Dialogues focus on information and communications technology (ICT), as digital transformation and trade is a major current focus for both the Pacific Islands Forum and Australia. New submarine cables will deliver greater connectivity in the Pacific, opening more digital opportunities.

ICDP mentors Dialogue participants as they develop their projects, and regardless of their eventual outcomes, team members will benefit from the relationships they forge within ICDP and the networks they join around the region.

Forty per cent of Dialogue participants hail from the business sector, and while participants from governments, non-government organisations (NGOs) and not-for-profit sector are welcome, ICDP emphasises its engagement with the commercial sector.

Forum participants were invited to discuss more ways to engage with ICDP after the keynote addresses.



## Keynote Addresses

### **The Hon. Christopher Pyne MP Minister for Defence, Australian Government**

Dr Watt AC introduced the keynote speakers and outlined Minister Pyne's initial role in raising the issue of Australian soft power in the Pacific.

The Hon. Christopher Pyne MP acknowledged the traditional owners of the land and his colleagues in attendance. He stressed the importance of support for *Pacific Connect* and ICDP across the Pacific and thanked its Board members for their work. He saw the Sydney Forum as timely, coming the day after the Pacific Islands Forum stressed the need for regional security and collaboration. Australian defence forces are being strengthened to uphold the international rules-based order and maintain regional peace and security.

The Australian Government is determined to strengthen relationships with like-minded partners in the South Pacific and across the Indo-Pacific region. Australia has longstanding and ongoing connections to the Pacific, and the Forum has assembled a remarkable group of people to further those relationships.

The 2016 Defence White Paper and 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper stress the high priority the Australian Government places upon improved engagement with PNG, Timor Leste and Pacific Island nations. The Pacific Islands encompass a maritime realm covering 15% of the world's surface, and the opportunities and challenges facing the Pacific are as vast as the ocean itself. The region's unique scale and geography mean Australia and Pacific nations must collectively address rising sea levels, disaster relief, transnational crime, illegal fishing, and an array of other problems from a regional perspective.

In an effort to deepen Australian security and economic integration with the rest of the region, Australia is embarking on a 'Pacific step-up' to strengthen these connections as they grow ever-more important in an increasingly globalised region. The government has backed the laying of undersea cables to connect PNG, Vanuatu, Samoa and other countries in the Pacific, but defence also plays a pivotal role in achieving this aim.

Australia's Defence Cooperation Programme (DCP) delivers capacity building assistance to 30 countries around the world, including 13 in the Pacific and Timor Leste region. The Pacific and Timor Leste Defence Cooperation budget is approximately \$130 million for the current financial year and represents 80% of the total DCP budget worldwide, demonstrating Australia's commitment to the stability and security of the region. The Pacific assistance includes more than 80 defence advisers in situ to mentor their local counterparts, exercises, infrastructure and short and long-term training and education courses inside and outside Australia.



The Australian Government is committing a further \$2 billion to the Pacific over the next 30 years through the Pacific Maritime Security Programme (PMSP). The PMSP forms the centrepiece of Australia's defence engagement in the Pacific and succeeds the Pacific Patrol Boat (PPB) programme, through which Australia gave 22 patrol boats to 12 participating Pacific Islands between 1987 and 1997. The PMSP builds on that success and will replace those patrol boats, integrate aerial surveillance and enhance regional coordination.

The Australian Department of Defence will give 21 Guardian Class patrol boats to Pacific Islands and Timor Leste over the next five years. The keel of the first vessel was laid in 2017, and *HMPNGS Ted Diro (P401)* will be delivered to PNG in January 2019. The Guardian Class boats are designed for Pacific maritime patrol and incorporate the functional and technological lessons learned from the PPB programme, having more size, capability and range than their predecessors.

The PMSP will also enhance regional maritime security through aerial surveillance of the western and central Pacific. Long-range aircraft will support targeted, intelligence-driven maritime patrols and help Pacific states locate and disrupt illegal activity within their exclusive economic zones and adjacent high seas. The first two King Air 200 aerial surveillance aircraft are now based in Samoa and Vanuatu and will use up to 10 forward-operating bases each year; 300 hours of surveillance has already produced 174 sightings which were referred to the Regional Fisheries Surveillance Centre.

Operation Frigate Bird saw a joint maritime patrol of Nauru's exclusive economic zone involving King Air 200 aerial surveillance, the Kiribati Patrol Boat *RS Kirini* and fisheries protection personnel from both Kiribati and Nauru. The exercise demonstrates how regional cooperation supported by Australian Defence is improving connections and security across the Pacific.

Australia's previous Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon. Marise Payne, attended the Pacific Islands Forum in Nauru and announced that Australia will collaborate with its Pacific partners to establish a Pacific Fusion Centre to strengthen maritime domain awareness and inform regional responses to shared security challenges. The Centre will work with Pacific countries and existing regional organisations to aggregate and analyse security information and inform responses to security challenges, such as illegal fishing, people smuggling and drug trafficking.

This announcement supports the third aim of the PMSP to improve regional coordination by encouraging the sharing and use of information generated by patrols and national organisations. Participating countries will be able to collect, analyse, manage and share maritime security information across their national agencies and with neighbouring countries and the regional coordination centres.

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The PMSP and the new Fusion Centre offer just two examples of the Australian government's partnership activities to respond to security challenges across the region. It has also announced a partnership with Fiji to build a new forward deployment base for peacekeeping activities, police, emergency services and training in Fiji.

Minister Pyne thanked the Forum's organisers and was pleased that ICDP has fulfilled his initial hopes for it. He remembered working with the US Congress-funded National Democratic Institute in Washington DC and undertaking in-country assessments of civil societies around the world. Its approach was also based on dialogues, but Australia has lacked this capability until now. The Minister praised DFAT's support of *Pacific Connect* and pledged to help ICDP and *Pacific Connect* in his role in Defence. He looked forward to hearing more about ICDP activities and engaging with participants in the future.

The Australian Government is determined to strengthen relationships with like-minded partners in the South Pacific and across the Indo-Pacific region. Australia has longstanding and ongoing connections to the Pacific, and the Forum has assembled a remarkable group of people to further those relationships.



**The Hon. Christopher Pyne MP**



**The Hon. Afamasaga Lepuia'i Rico Tupa'i**  
**Minister for Communications and Information Technology**  
**Government of Samoa**

Dr Ian Watt AC introduced The Hon. Afamasaga Lepuia'i Rico Tupa'i, the Samoan Minister for Communications and Information Technology, and outlined his experience in regional media companies and renewable energy.

Minister Afamasaga acknowledged the Forum's participants, congratulated Minister Pyne on his new appointment and thanked ICDP for their hospitality.

Connectivity is improving throughout the Pacific as new submarine cables are laid. The question facing Pacific leaders is how to optimise the opportunities provided by this hardware and ensure that everyone, including people on smaller islands, can access the region's digital development. Investment in connectivity can bring high returns, as it enhances education, entrepreneurship and the integration of local economies in global markets.

The first *Digital Pacific* conference<sup>3</sup>, held in Apia in June 2018 and organised by Samoa's Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT), welcomed participants from seven Pacific Island nations and experts in digital transformation and private sector representatives from around the world. No one country can go it alone in terms of digital transformation, and *Digital Pacific 2018* marked the beginning of a regional dialogue about partnerships to achieve this goal.

Pacific colleagues must collaborate to maximise the impact of connectivity in the region and make technology work for its citizens and communities. The Pacific Connect Forum welcomes emerging Pacific leaders who are not only 'tech savvy' but are open-minded and willing to forge unity between Pacific Islands. *Pacific Connect* can play a vital role in bringing people together, but the hearts, minds and spirits of participants must remain connected beyond the day's activities to create tangible solutions, stimulate regional economies and fast-track development through technology.

The small populations and geographical isolation of Pacific Islands should be seen as a benefit in the future, rather than the excuse of the past. Minister Afamasaga urged participants to work together to unite the Pacific through digital communication and share ideas, costs and risks to transform regional economies and benefit local people. He hoped to see the creation of 'One Pacific' and develop strength through unity.

He applauded the initiative of the Australian Government to partner with the private sector through *Pacific Connect*. While the scheme aims to expand Australia's engagement with the region, its tangible results in terms of increasing prosperity for Pacific residents may be even more significant. The creation of Pacific Island projects with Australian technical and financial stewardship will help the region to eventually stand on its own.

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Minister Afamasaga recalled being told by his father to finish whatever he started and urged participants to ensure that the digital solutions they discussed were brought to fruition. He hoped that the 'One Pacific' created by digital connectivity would help the region compete in global markets as it never has before. He wished participants well at the Forum and in their future activities.

Connectivity is improving throughout the Pacific as new submarine cables are laid. The question facing Pacific leaders is how to optimise the opportunities provided by this hardware and ensure that everyone, including people on smaller islands, can access the region's digital development. Investment in connectivity can bring high returns, as it enhances education, entrepreneurship and the integration of local economies in global markets.



**The Hon. Afamasaga Rico Tupa'i**



**Michelle Rowland MP**  
**Australian Shadow Minister for Communications**

Dr Watt AC agreed that ICDP and its participants should think in terms of 'One Pacific' linked by digital connectivity, rather than individual nations, before introducing Michelle Rowland MP, Australian Shadow Minister for Communications.

Ms Rowland thanked GAP and ICDP for her invitation to speak and their contribution to facilitating Pacific dialogue. She noted her own Fijian heritage and abiding interest in the success of the Pacific and the strength of Australia's regional relationships. The Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon. Penny Wong, the Shadow Minister for Defence, the Hon. Richard Marles MP, and the Shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Senator Claire Moore, have also been consistent advocates for deepening Australia's engagement and investments in the Pacific.

Ms Rowland offered personal observations in three principal areas:

- the need for a framework against which Pacific Island nations can identify and plan their connectivity priorities,
- the opportunity for Pacific Island nations to leverage disruptive technologies to leapfrog existing delivery models, and
- the importance of capacity building to ensure emerging nations can make the best of improved connectivity.

Beginning with the power of connectivity to enable digital trade, Ms Rowland observed that digitisation represents a remarkable and profound shift from the world of thirty years ago. Before the first industrial revolution, the gross domestic product (GDP) of nations was largely a function of population. Whether they lived in the East or West, the average worker produced a similar output. The more people a nation had, therefore, the more it would produce. This meant that China was the world's largest economy for much of history before the mid-eighteenth century, but this changed with the first industrial revolution which began around 1760.

The development of steam power led to new methods of production that boosted productivity, and so nations which had access to technology and capital, and the capacity to leverage them, thrived, while those who did not were left behind. This meant population was no longer the prime determinant of economic weight, and significant differences between the relative productivity of nations emerged over the next two centuries.

However, this began to change in the 1990s as the internet began to reshape the way information, knowledge, capital and goods flow across borders. Australia's former Prime Minister, Paul Keating, observed that once the productivity inducing inputs of capital and technology became ubiquitous, it was only a matter of time before the states with the largest populations produced the greatest GDP.

This idea is becoming a reality in Asia, where the economies of China, India and Indonesia continue to grow rapidly as the relationship between population and GDP is re-forged. As these trends appear likely to last, smaller regional nations must decide how to use connectivity to make the best of the growing middle class produced by economic change and identify and exploit the relative advantages of smaller nations in a world that is returning to scale. Whatever their answer, connectivity and the ability to leverage new technologies will play a crucial role in the future.

Turning to digital inclusion in the Pacific, Ms Rowland noted that more than half of the world's internet users lived in the Indo-Pacific in 2017, although only 46.4% of households in the region were connected to the Internet the year before. In comparison, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reports that roughly 86% of Australian households have access to the internet, including 97% of households with children under the age of 15.

Smaller regional nations must decide how to use connectivity to make the best of the growing middle class produced by economic change and identify and exploit the relative advantages of smaller nations in a world that is returning to scale. Whatever their answer, connectivity and the ability to leverage new technologies will play a crucial role in the future.



**Michelle Rowland MP**

A World Bank study found that GDP increases by 1.21% in developed economies, and 1.38% in emerging ones, with every 10% increase in broadband penetration. A separate study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) found that GDP growth is 2.7% to 3.9% higher after the introduction of broadband.

Each country is at a different stage of development and may therefore need different policy prescriptions. Nonetheless, as a starting point, it would be useful to have a framework by which regions and nations can collect data in a consistent manner, identify priorities, and use those insights to develop policy responses which aim to deliver the most benefit at the least cost.

A framework developed by RMIT and Telstra offers a useful starting point in formulating Pacific strategies for digital inclusion, as it defines inclusion in terms of access, affordability and digital ability. Australia lacks digital engagement within certain



demographics for a variety of reasons, but in other nations the issues of infrastructure access and the quality of existing connectivity can be more important, as might the use of connectivity to improve the social and economic participation of women and girls.

Finally, Ms Rowland addressed opportunities in the Pacific to leapfrog existing delivery models by constructing and integrating new digitally enabled services. The availability of flexible cloud services, data analytics, blockchain technology and the Internet of Things create opportunities to deliver better and cheaper services without the constraints of sunk costs and highly entrenched legacy arrangements. Pacific nations can therefore bypass less effective and more capital-intensive approaches that were commonplace elsewhere before those technologies came along.

Blockchain offers a topical example. In any given society, there are multitudes of transactions that require an institutional intermediary, such as a bank or a law firm, but blockchain can now provide the identification, assurance and security that this intermediary would often perform.

Ms Rowland highlighted the evolution of Australia Post, an agency in the Communications portfolio that does not enjoy as much air time as the NBN or the media, as an example of change. Australia Post is an iconic institution that finds itself in the midst of the e-commerce boom, as a report by Access Economics finds that Australia Post facilitates over 80% of Australia's \$14 billion e-commerce market. It is one of the most trusted brands in the country, with three in four Australians considering it to be a core part of national identity. Every day the company is helping new small businesses to be created, and existing small businesses to grow.

In her first year of leadership, Auspost's new Chief Executive Officer, Christine Holgate, has understood the role of the organisation in the community, instilled a sense of optimism about future possibilities and demonstrated her determination to find new ways to expand its business by exploring opportunities that might otherwise have been left untouched. The irreversible structural decline of traditional letters means the delivery of products bought and sold online must cross-subsidise the postal services and social presence, which many regional communities in Australia still rely upon.

Many people have spent time thinking about the disruption of the letters business and what the future might hold, including the concept of delivery itself. Companies such as Uber have already taken underused assets, such as privately owned vehicles, and put them to work in the real economy to offer ride-sharing and food and grocery delivery. In the not-so-distant future, high speed 5G networks, driverless cars, aerial drones and their flood of data may reshape how people conceptualise transport, asset ownership and the last mile delivery of physical goods.

However, what may be a disruption in one region can be a sensible starting point in another. Rather than playing catch-up and following existing development paths, emerging Pacific economies may have the opportunity to leverage connectivity and disruptive

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technologies as a means to move directly into cheaper and more flexible forms of service delivery. Such opportunities are there for the taking, if the infrastructure is in place.

Turning to the importance of capacity building, Ms Rowland agreed that “no one country can go it alone on digital transformation”. Central to all these efforts will be sustained commitments to build capacity.

For many years, a portion of Australia’s annual contribution to the International Telecommunications Union was earmarked for this purpose and used to deliver support in areas such as course development at The University of the South Pacific (USP), and development of communications laws and regulatory systems in Tonga.

Ms Rowland said that in her previous role as a telecommunications lawyer, she worked on a variety of capacity building projects in the Asia-Pacific region, including a Samoan initiative to establish a communications regulator and stimulate mobile competition. These experiences taught her the value of knowledge and skills transfer to our Pacific neighbours and the good this can achieve.

Capacity building is the process by which individuals and societies develop the ability to achieve their own objectives. Such communities are better prepared to respond to whatever opportunities or challenges come along. In a world where the pace of technological change continues to increase, it would be fair to assume that such opportunities will also blossom if the fundamentals of connectivity are established.

Dr Watt thanked Ms Rowland for her address and underlined the importance of regulation in driving regional digital opportunities. He thanked other speakers, delegates and ICDP personnel for their contributions to Pacific development. He encouraged Forum participants to deepen their involvement with *Pacific Connect* by attending and facilitating Dialogues, offering ideas and mentoring participants.



*Michelle Rowland MP, the Hon. Afamasaga Rico Tupa'i and the Hon. Christopher Pyne MP*



## Session 1 - “Australia-Pacific Connections for a Digital Future”

**Andrew Carriline** thanked the keynote speakers and supported the concept of ‘One Pacific’ empowered by digital connectivity. He welcomed new participants and previous Dialogue participants and underlined the potential for the region’s rapidly expanding digital connectivity to radically transform national economies and personal livelihoods. He encouraged participants to discuss connectivity as an enabler of opportunity in the Pacific and drive sustainable development, create businesses and jobs and improve people’s lives.

Mr Carriline hoped the involvement of senior representatives from government, business and academia from both Australia and Pacific states in the Forum would ensue a broad perspective in group discussions and outlined the Forum’s agenda. He encouraged participants to consider a wide range of issues, including digital innovations to tackle developmental challenges, blockchain, education and digital literacy, e-commerce, the digital delivery of services, cyber security and digital currencies. He then introduced the next speaker, **Peter Kenilorea Jr** from the Solomon Islands, and outlined his distinguished career.

**Peter Kenilorea Jr** offered his initial thoughts on digital issues and stressed his belief that connectivity is about people rather than technology. Pacific people have been connecting for thousands of years through traditional means, using a host of languages and tools such as drums and conch shells. Islanders used paddling canoes and catamarans with sails to venture between different islands, and now cars and telephones have been joined by broadband to move connectivity into another realm.

Pacific Islanders now straddle the analogue and digital worlds, and Mr Kenilorea explained how his uncles now use conch shells and cell phones in turn. Other cultures may have lost their traditional modes of communication, but they remain strong in the Pacific, and he warned against forgetting long-standing cultural connections in pursuit of new technology.

The vast ocean divides Pacific nations but also unites them. The Pacific is the ‘aquatic continent’, and so connections between Islands have always been maritime. Pacific people were able to navigate by the stars and read the waves to discover new lands and opportunities. The arrival of aircraft allowed people to fly over the ocean at much greater speeds, and now digital connections allow people to communicate at the speed of light through cables beneath the ocean.

A new submarine cable should reach the Solomon Islands by the end of 2019, giving it almost instant connection to the world. People still paddle their dugout canoes to go fishing in the Solomon Islands, but they also take jets around the world and look forward to better internet connections. Technology came first to the developed world, but small Pacific Islands can now leapfrog older infrastructure to grasp the opportunities offered by state-of-the-art digital solutions.

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While welcoming these changes, Mr Kenilorea again urged Pacific Islanders to retain their sense of who they are and their long-standing, deep-seated traditional connections. Australia may dabble with tribalism through its sports, but it runs through the blood of Pacific Islanders. Tribal and community allegiances should be nurtured in the future and new technology should not take people from their roots.

Mr Kenilorea closed with a story about his uncle's initial terror but growing joy during his first car journey in the 1960s. New experiences often provoke a natural sense of trepidation and caution, and older people may look on digital change in the same way. However, Mr Kenilorea expressed his faith in the future and the power of technology to transform the lives and livelihoods of Pacific Islanders. The excitement of high-speed internet is tempered by the dangers it can conceal, but as with his uncle, initial fears will subside when people embrace it and move forward. The digital Pacific can move forward at the speed of light, while holding on to its past. Mr Kenilorea urged participants to look at digital connections in the context of the Pacific and accept that they may appear different to other regions in the world.

In 2007, only 1.8% of people on the Solomon Islands had access to the internet at home. A decade later, in 2017, that figure had increased to 19%, while mobile phone use reached 78%. Progress continues to be made and with courage, creativity and imagination, Pacific people can work with their Australian friends to make the most of new opportunities. The ocean which separates people in the Pacific is also the ocean which unites them, and Mr Kenilorea thanked the Forum's organisers for the chance to help make 'One Pacific' a reality.

Mr Carriline praised Mr Kenilorea's optimism and urged delegates to "face and conquer the fear and embrace the opportunity" in their turn.



*Andrew Carriline, Brenda Heather-Latu and Dr Ian Watt AC*



## Discussion

Mr Carriline welcomed questions from the floor.

The first speaker agreed that digital approaches offer opportunities to leapfrog legacy approaches and improve equity of access but noted that metropolitan and rural areas of Australia also experience different levels of provision.

Technology can be integrated with people's daily lives to improve them, and blockchain can leapfrog traditional financial intermediaries and create transnational systems of trade and identity management. One global funding organisation uses the internet to give microcapital loans to women in Samoa, Timor Leste and the Solomon Islands, while a South African organisation called The Sun Exchange allows investors to buy solar panels in development projects. These investors receive payments over time through bitcoin, with payments administered through blockchain technology to reduce administrative costs. Other capacity building projects show how simple applications of blockchain can transform people's lives, but people in the region must be educated about the technique to trust it and use it effectively.

Pacific delegates were asked to identify barriers to digital engagement in the region and suggest new products or services to drive widespread adoption of digital techniques.

It was noted that the banking system hampers e-commerce in the Pacific, as cumbersome payment methods deter or prevent transactions from international customers. Telegraphic transfers can take four days and incur significant costs, but the use of intermediary crypto-tokens could allow instant transactions, and several start-ups are offering new remittance services. However, it was also argued that there is a wide spectrum of digital maturity across the Pacific, and individual regions and nations should be assessed in terms of their basic ICT infrastructure, before blanket blockchain or other digital solutions can be adopted.

Around 2 billion Australian dollars flow through the Pacific every year, and while some of these funds are dedicated to research, there is no central repository for the data generated to be stored, analysed or accessed. The usefulness of data degrades over time, meaning much of its value is lost if it is not immediately accessible. A project at the USP is looking to curate the data created by aid and scientific organisations, allowing decision makers and business people to access the information they need to improve their decision making.

Many people in PNG, including parliamentarians, lack understanding of blockchain beyond its use as a technology buzzword. A recent identity proposal using blockchain appeared to set up a 'country within a country' which would have had serious consequences. Efforts must be made to explain blockchain to Pacific Islanders before such schemes can be used. Blockchain can be used for governance as well as financial transfers, assuring transparency for land titles, for example, in PNG. Rather than talk about blockchain in the abstract, participants were urged to find specific issues it might help resolve.

A Solomon Islands delegate stressed the need to extend banking services to more people in the region through mobile services. One scheme, run in partnership with the ANZ Bank, has registered 60,000 users and has 170 agents in the Pacific who support financial literacy projects such as 'MoneyMinded'. Improvements in telecommunications are still required, and while the new submarine cable will help, there will still be regions without coverage, which other solutions should address. It was observed that Australians without experience of the Pacific are always surprised by the number of people without bank accounts.

A participant from Vanuatu agreed that many challenges remain to be overcome before the Pacific is truly connected and that regional decision makers and parliamentarians must be better informed about blockchain to encourage its use. While Vanuatu has relatively comprehensive 3G coverage, citizens outside urban areas need more education to understand the benefits of ICT and the potential of the internet beyond Facebook. End users should be engaged to discover their needs to ensure they use new services, rather than imposing complicated frameworks from above without consultation. While blockchain has a range of possible uses, such solutions will not be used by ordinary people if they do not understand them and so they could incur costs without producing results. A major reason for the ubiquity of Facebook is that it is offered for free to Pacific users and so does not impinge on their data quotas.

The next speaker encouraged participants to consider cyber security. Public authorities hold sensitive information about citizens, and digitisation and improved connectivity can offer a means for unauthorised people to steal it. The speaker admired the zeal shown by digital advocates but cautioned them to ensure new developments are both secure and reliable.

The following speaker agreed for the need for better digital literacy in the community and a balanced approach between short-term market opportunities and longer-term projects such as blockchain. Communities will trust decision makers and back new projects if they deliver tangible outcomes for ordinary people.

A contributor from PNG backed the calls for better digital literacy. One framework for bridging the digital divide in rural Pacific populations, presented at a recent conference, has three elements, including the provision of suitable infrastructure such as the new submarine cables. The second element involves people having affordable access to that infrastructure, but the third element of usability is the most important, as people must know how to use the connectivity available to them.

A Samoan delegate noted the previous day's visit to the Stone & Chalk incubator and its presentation on blockchain. Public blockchains can be volatile, meaning that private blockchain systems may be preferable in the Pacific, given cyber security concerns. More information about creating private blockchains would be welcome and may be discussed later in proceedings.



## Update on progress from *Pacific Connect Dialogues*

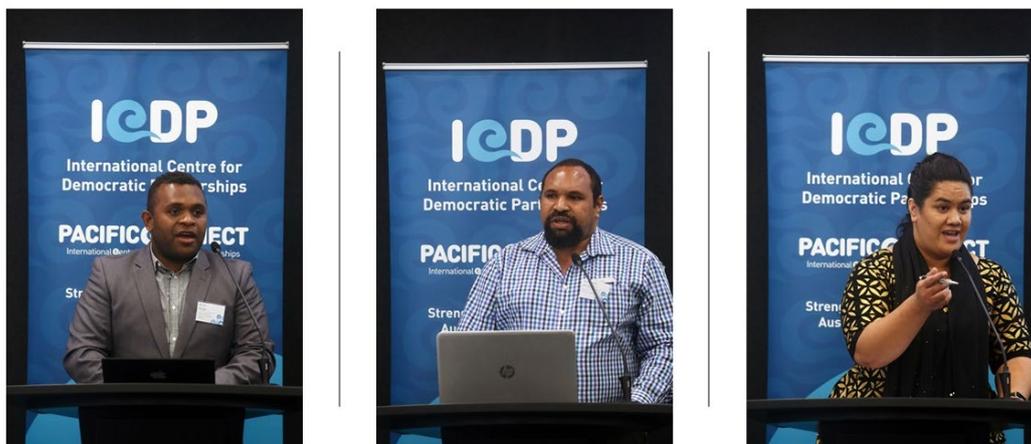
Mr Carriline introduced three speakers to offer updates on projects begun at recent *Pacific Connect Dialogues*.

### **Inaugural *Pacific Connect Business Network Dialogue* in PNG**

**Emmanuel Narokobi, Managing Director,  
Masalai Communications, PNG**

Emmanuel Narokobi said the first Dialogue in Port Moresby identified two projects to use blockchain. While the plans to offer a private sector identity scheme for the banking sector and to track agricultural produce have not developed as hoped, they have forged relationships between the participants. The ID project has been abandoned, while the agricultural scheme is on 'life support', but participants will put together written feedback for *Pacific Connect*.

The PNG participants are reframing their approach and, instead of seeking approval from the Dialogue's facilitators, have agreed to focus on their core purpose of encouraging economic development in PNG and using Australian aid more effectively to produce sustainable solutions. They will help build a scaleable and sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem in PNG and encourage business links between PNG and Australia. Discussions have moved beyond Dialogue participants' initial identification with their homelands to the agreement of these shared goals and the formation of partnerships to solve problems and seek opportunities.



*Brian Mangi, Emmanuel Narokobi and Nadia Meredith-Hunt*

## Inaugural *Pacific Connect Academic Network Dialogue* in Fiji

**Brian Mangi, Network Administrator,  
ICT Department, Solomon Islands National University**

Brian Mangi said the Suva Dialogue had focused on regional capacity building in online learning and academic management systems. It involved 10 Australian and 30 Pacific participants from a range of academic institutions. The first part of their discussion looked at digital platforms to enhance student learning, while the second sought to identify digital solutions to common problems.

Seven projects were put forward at the Dialogue, and subsequent discussions focused on two schemes which participants could progress at affordable cost.

The first is an online course to help educators adapt existing courses for mobile devices. The second looks to create an online community for professionals running tertiary administration and learning management systems in Australia and the Pacific. USP has agreed to take the lead through its Centre for Flexible Learning, and participants are suggesting project groups to link together to form the desired community.

The Suva Dialogue offered an opportunity for new and small institutions to make contact with larger organisations in the Pacific and Australia and for individuals to forge connections which benefit their universities.

## *Pacific Connect Dialogue* in Samoa

**Nadia Meredith-Hunt, Chief Executive Officer, KVAConsult, Samoa**

Nadia Meredith-Hunt said Samoa's roadmap for digital transformation had been launched in June 2018, and the *Pacific Connect Dialogue* aligned with its goals. The Dialogue identified two projects to build on the nation's core assets of people and culture, backed by Australian technical expertise.

The first project involves immersive storytelling in virtual reality on the theme of climate change and is now securing funding for a draft budget. Facilities to host Australian participants and possible tax relief are also being sought from the Samoan government. Filming for the project will be undertaken in November 2018, and the finished product will be released in July 2019 to coincide with the South Pacific Games.

The second project looks to establish a creative hub, and visits to BlueChilli and Stone & Chalk have inspired ideas for future progress, although more funding is required.

Ms Meredith-Hunt said that while Dialogue participants were urged to pursue their self-interest, Pacific culture tends to be more community-minded, and local projects in Samoa and PNG could be scaled in the future to benefit community needs.



## Question & Answer

Mr Carriline thanked the speakers and invited observations and questions from participants.

The use of technology to encourage traditional customs and culture in nations such as Vanuatu was suggested to counter the distraction of Facebook and other online platforms.

One delegate backed the calls for greater digital literacy to improve personal security but noted that many blockchain projects do not need users to understand the complex process underpinning them. Credit cards with near-field communication capability, for example, can be linked to cryptocurrency infrastructure for security, without users needing to know how this is achieved.

Another delegate spoke about a project to digitally archive cultural knowledge in the Northern Territory of Australia which is being developed on similar lines to the immersive storytelling scheme in Samoa. Both projects will train people in the cultural field to use virtual reality techniques to give tourists and other users insight into traditional cultures.

The following speaker mentioned the American 1Earth Institute Inc which also helps marry traditional values and modern technology.

The intersection of modern technology and traditional knowledge interested another delegate, who highlighted the potential for digitally connected focus groups to create new knowledge across the region.

The next speaker noted that entrepreneurs in PNG have struggled to convince others that ICT is a driver of economic growth since the internet came to the country in 1996. Small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) only generate 6% of Papua New Guinea's GDP, far below the levels of other countries. Blockchain can empower transparency and traceability, and the initial *Pacific Connect* Dialogue in Port Moresby highlighted the need to support entrepreneurs in the nation as a whole.

A regulator was worried by the idea that users need not understand the complexity of blockchain-based operations and called for practical examples of its use.

Finally, the need for political will and commitment was underlined if regional economies are to be transformed. Samoa has changed its driving laws and relation to the international dateline in the last decade, and similar decisiveness is required to empower digital progression. The project to create a creative hub in Samoa could attract support from other Pacific countries and the national government.

# PACIFICCONNECTFORUM

Participants were thanked for their contributions. Mr Carriline summed up the discussion under several themes, the first being the need for technology to be accessible and usable to be effective. Blockchain should be seen as a possible solution for some problems, rather than the automatic solution for everything or an end in itself. The need for education to improve digital literacy, more support for entrepreneurs, better payment methods and improved governance offer opportunities for new activities, but the importance of data security should always be remembered.

The digital creation of data, the curation of culture and steps to tackle climate change were also highlighted, as new technology can be used to support existing ways of life, rather than supplant them. The concept of 'One Pacific' resonated with many participants at a social, political and spiritual level, and Mr Carriline hoped these ideas offered a sound platform for future collaboration.





## Session Two - “Building a *Pacific Connect* Alumni Community”

Mr Carriline introduced **Michael Collins**, Partner at Strategic Development Group, to facilitate the community-building session. Strategic Development Group is collaborating with ICDP, GAP and DFAT to deliver *Pacific Connect*.

Mr Collins invited Forum delegates to consider the reasons for their involvement and what they want their participation to achieve. He outlined his own motivations for involvement, including a passion for helping communities connect to one another, an interest in seeing more Pacific expertise utilised in consulting work, and a desire to meet new people and build long-term partnerships. He suggested that people in the room could help each other achieve their goals and encouraged them to interact.

*Pacific Connect* involves putting the right people in the room together and seeing what they generate. It takes time to develop relationships and achieve success, and Mr Collins asked participants to consider how they will continue to work together to solve shared challenges in the long term. He suggested the concept of ‘alumni’ was too formal for their purposes, and championed more organic, personal and enjoyable connections maintained through a Pacific “Community” or “Family”.

He invited tables of participants to discuss future activities and report back on their conclusions. He stressed the importance of creating a sense of community, rather than forcing or institutionalising ongoing relationships. Interactions should be of mutual benefit to help all participants develop their ideas, achieve their ambitions and solve common challenges together.

Finally, Mr Collins said any solutions should be ‘participant-friendly’. Everyone is already busy, with ‘15,000 logins’ to manage, and so participation should not be an additional burden. *Pacific Connect* does not have the resources to produce a ‘Rolls Royce’ alumni programme, but it can help participants pursue their own ideas and leverage each other’s



*Prof Ian Young AO, Peter Kenilorea Jr and Michael Collins*

## Group Discussion

Members discussed their personal ambitions, considered future goals for *Pacific Connect* and defined criteria for success in their allotted groups. Each table was asked for a couple of ideas to encourage future collaboration, such as online forums or mentoring, or the use of social media.

## Report Back Session

The first table stressed their mutual desire to drive sustainable economic development in their homelands. They wanted to be part of a project-focused network, solving problems through a vibrant collaborative approach. They saw Facebook as the easiest and most accessible online forum to use to stay in touch, given its widespread use in the Pacific, although the Slack online platform could also be employed.

The second group saw the objective of *Pacific Connect* as utilising unused capacity. Success could be measured by the dollars invested overseas by Australian companies. New start-up hubs could allow participants to connect across different countries. Facebook and Slack were again favoured as the best online communication platforms. A breakfast meeting on the day after the Forum was organised to consider the start-up innovation lab proposal for PNG, and other Dialogue participants were invited to attend.

The third table said success could be defined in terms of progress towards a 'connected Pacific' and the improvement of Australian-Pacific connections, and they saw empathy as the key to these relationships. ICDP has established and fuelled connections which have become self-sustaining because these conversations are driven by outcomes. These outcomes include making people happy by delivering value that is experienced by Pacific Island communities. Australia and Australian participants must also derive value from *Pacific Connect* activities to stay involved. Practical projects will help participants maintain focus and create outcomes. Technology is a glue which can hold people together, but it is an enabler, rather than an end in itself. People, rather than technology, will solve the problems they face together.

The fourth table stressed the potential of the internet and social media to promote and strengthen Pacific culture, education and local businesses. Technology is helping everyone in the region become more connected and successful and communicate more fluently. Further steps to improve internet facilities in Fiji and other Pacific Island nations are still required. The Pacific faces a range of problems, not least climate change. Kiribati and other Islands are threatened by rising sea levels caused by global warming, and the 3D presentation planned on the issue could usefully be shown to politicians who still oppose carbon reduction measures. Artificial intelligence, blockchain and other innovations can all be used to drive development in the Pacific.



The fifth group recalled that Australian-funded research into the use of ICT in the public sector in the Solomon Islands, Samoa, Palau and Kiribati in 2016<sup>4</sup> made five recommendations relevant to the current discussion. These included improving internet infrastructure in rural areas and greater market competition to improve services and reduce prices. Creating, aligning and strengthening institutional ICT policies was also encouraged, alongside human resource development to ensure progress was implemented effectively. Enhancing public awareness, not least in terms of mobile phone use, was also vital, as consistent messages are required to improve public understanding of security issues. Little progress has been made on some of these goals, and revisiting the report and redoubling efforts to achieve these goals could be beneficial.

ICDP has established and fuelled connections which have become self-sustaining because these conversations are driven by outcomes. These outcomes include making people happy by delivering value that is experienced by Pacific Island communities.



Sustainability is the key to success, and the extension of access to everyone in Pacific communities should be a priority. Common interests should drive projects and collaboration within *Pacific Connect*; however, these projects need not be formal in nature and could include conversations or other activities. Awareness of other schemes and organisations, such as the existing PNG Digital ICT Cluster, is important to encourage the crosspollination of ideas and avoid duplication of effort.

The next table thought of success in terms of achieving self-reliance and sustainability. It also urged the creation of partnerships and synergies with other organisations and schemes. It suggested WhatsApp as a more informal alternative to Slack to help participants stay connected, while some form of communication based on a private blockchain might be developed in the future.

The following speaker underlined that trust and empathy are vital elements in any project's success, as all activities depend on the people involved in them. The experience of the first Dialogue in PNG has shown how outside commitments and other priorities can impinge on voluntary work for *Pacific Connect* projects. Entrepreneurs in PNG and elsewhere lack social safety nets and are in some cases already struggling to put food on the table themselves. Projects therefore need incentives for their participants to encourage their long-term involvement.

A lack of communication – through Slack, WhatsApp, Facebook or other online platforms – hampers project progress, and the provision of more time for initial Dialogue meetings could deepen the initial relationships required to secure ongoing interaction. Undue

focus on unexplained technology when discussing solutions can mean participants fail to adequately commit to projects themselves.

The final speaker prioritised the value of the individuals involved, rather than additional contributions to national GDP, when calculating the benefits of their interactions. There is no metric to measure relationships, but projects which are firmly rooted in the family culture of the South Pacific will be of the greatest benefit and will allow Australians to learn as well as contribute.

It was agreed that ICDP will have succeeded when it is no longer required, as it will have established a self-sustaining network that works throughout the Pacific beyond the initial set of Dialogues and projects.

Technology is a glue which can hold people together,  
but it is an enabler, rather than an end in itself.  
People, rather than technology, will solve the  
problems they face together.



Delegates were then invited to join new groups to discuss a range of particular topics, including ways to stay in touch online, using the proposed start-up labs as a platform for cooperation, making progress with Dialogue projects, the immediate future of *Pacific Connect*, organising local events to build face-to-face connections, implementing the 2016 ICT recommendations<sup>5</sup>, and exploring blockchain potential.

After these discussions, one delegate offered to undertake further work on blockchain-based fiat currencies. Another participant welcomed the Forum's consideration of the internet in terms of people, rather than things, in keeping with Pacific culture. Rather than talk about fridges which can count their contents themselves, he was glad the Forum had discussed matters which mattered to ordinary people in the community.

While DFAT provides scholarships to students in Fiji and other Pacific nations, the extension of support to entrepreneurs and start-ups in PNG and the Pacific to help them access markets in Australia and join Australian tech-hubs would help develop talent and opportunities in the region.

Participants were encouraged to continue their work to create a people-centred, problem-driven network and collaborate on mutual solutions.



## Summary of Outcomes & Next Steps

**Prof Ian Young AO**, Director of ICDP and Kernot Professor of Engineering, at the University of Melbourne, said *Pacific Connect* was created to build people-to-people relationships within the Pacific and between Australia and Pacific Island nations. It also aims to connect and develop emerging leaders through ‘Second Track’ processes whose ongoing projects cement continuing relationships. While individual conferences and seminars are enjoyable and interesting, they tend not to produce lasting or tangible benefits. ICDP is modestly funded, and its handful of staff cannot progress Dialogue projects themselves. ICDP facilitates meetings and mentors participants, but projects should be driven by participants and new sources of investment should be found. Some projects will inevitably fail to thrive, but they should all help build stronger relationships.

The Forum’s keynote addresses outlined some of the broader reasons why Australia seeks stronger relationships with the Pacific. Australia has been guilty of largely ignoring the Pacific for too many years but is now realising the need for change for economic, social and defence reasons. ICDP could have chosen an alternative initial focus, such as health, trade, defence, public policy or a range of other ideas, but ICT is relevant to many different sectors and empowers relationship building.

Digital technology has changed the ways in which individuals, business and societies function around the world, and the opportunities offered by new submarine cables and their ability to digitally connect the Pacific’s diverse islands and leapfrog legacy technology are significant. ICDP’s focus on ICT is therefore an important facilitator to building new relationships, as well as an end in itself.

Projects from the first Dialogues from PNG, Fiji and Samoa are making progress, and participant feedback will help inform future events. ICDP will continue to hone its approach in the light of experience in the future.

The concept of ‘One Pacific’ raised at the Forum sums up the goals of *Pacific Connect*. The creation of a sustainable, ongoing community of participants will be crucial to its success, and initial projects should create lasting relationships which drive additional links, new projects and wider partnerships in the future beyond the realm of ICDP. Such intangibles are hard to measure but are of the greatest importance.

Next steps include the development of several active projects, the holding of three more Dialogues in 2018, and the building of the alumni community to keep participants connected through social media networks and other means.

ICDP will succeed by directly and indirectly building better links throughout the region and will look at new models of engagement as well as its existing activities to achieve this. Prof Young AO thanked ICDP board members, staff and Dialogue and Forum participants for their energy and hard work and encouraged to continue their efforts in the future.

# PACIFICCONNECTFORUM

Andrew Carriline recalled the lasting impression made on ICDP staff by the songs and cultural life of Samoa during a recent visit and introduced a musical performance by Tongan students of Newington College.

## Presentation by Tupou students from Newington College

**Dr David Mulford**, the Headmaster of Newington College, outlined its creation in 1863 and the subsequent work of its founder in Tonga as a Methodist missionary for four decades. The College has maintained strong links with Tonga and other Pacific Islands ever since and now has eight boarders who spend three years at the College, beginning in Year 10. The high cost of tertiary education is a barrier to Pacific students remaining in Australia, and many go on to study in Fiji. Dr Mulford introduced the students to the Forum, who then introduced and performed two Tongan songs.

The students also outlined their family backgrounds, their various journeys to study at Newington College and their ambitions for the future. They explained their initial struggle to study in English but also the benefits they have derived from their experience. While the students missed their families and traditional food, they welcomed the opportunity to expand their horizons, overcome their initial reticence and move on to tertiary education. They have gained skills and knowledge they can share on their return and hope other young people will receive similar opportunities.

The students were thanked for their outstanding performance, before **Catherine Fritz-Kalish** brought the Forum to a close.





# PROGRAMME

ICDP and Global Access Partners present

## PACIFICCONNECTFORUM

Thursday, 6 September 2018 • NSW Parliament House • 6 Macquarie Street • Sydney, Australia

### FORUM PROGRAMME

#### "AUSTRALIA-PACIFIC CONNECTIONS FOR A DIGITAL FUTURE"

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| 12:00pm | <i>Registration</i>   |
| 12:30pm | <i>Lunch served</i><br>Grace<br><b>Victor Vae'au</b> , Co-Managing Director, Sterling Group, New Zealand  |
| 12:45pm | <b>INTRODUCTION &amp; ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY</b><br>MC - <b>Catherine Fritz-Kallish</b> , Director, International Centre for Democratic Partnerships (ICDP), Co-Founder & Managing Director, Global Access Partners (GAP)<br><i>Welcome from the Pacific</i><br><b>Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu</b> , Special Advisor, ICDP Consultant, Strategic Development Group, Samoa<br><i>Overview of Pacific Connect</i><br><b>Dr Ian Watt AC</b> , Chairman, ICDP |
| 1:05pm  | <b>KEYNOTE ADDRESSES</b><br><b>The Hon. Christopher Pyne MP</b> , Australian Minister for Defence<br><b>The Hon. Afamasaga Lepula'i Rlco Tupa'i</b> , Minister for Communications and Information Technology, Government of Samoa<br><b>Michelle Rowland MP</b> , Australian Shadow Minister for Communications   |
| 1:35pm  | <b>SESSION ONE</b><br><i>"Australia-Pacific Connections for a Digital Future"</i><br>Facilitator - <b>Andrew Carrilline</b> , Non-Executive Director, Kina Securities; Chair, <i>Pacific Connect</i> Business Network Council<br>Initial thoughts<br><b>Peter Kenilorea Jr</b> , Solomon Islands  |
| 1:45pm  | Discussion  |

# PACIFICCONNECTFORUM

ICDP and Global Access Partners present

## PACIFICCONNECTFORUM

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- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| 2:15pm | <p><i>Update on progress from Pacific Connect Dialogues</i></p> <p>Inaugural Pacific Connect Business Network Dialogue in Papua New Guinea<br/><b>Emmanuel Narokobi</b>, Managing Director,<br/>Masalai Communications, Papua New Guinea</p> <p>Inaugural Pacific Connect Academic Network Dialogue in Fiji<br/><b>Brian Mangi</b>, Network Administrator, ICT Department, Solomon Islands<br/>National University</p> <p>Pacific Connect Dialogue in Samoa<br/><b>Nadia Meredith-Hunt</b>, Chief Executive Officer, KVAConsult, Samoa</p> |
| 2:45pm | Question & Answer  |
| 3:00pm | <i>Afternoon Tea Break</i>   |
| 3:30pm | <p>SESSION TWO</p> <p><i>"Building a Pacific Connect Alumni Community"</i></p> <p>Facilitator – <b>Michael Collins</b>, Partner, Strategic Development Group</p> <p>Group Discussion</p> <p>Report Back Session</p>  |
| 5:00pm | <p>SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES &amp; NEXT STEPS</p> <p><b>Prof Ian Young AO</b>, Director, ICDP<br/>Kernot Professor of Engineering, University of Melbourne</p>   |
| 5:10pm | <p>PRESENTATION BY TUPOU STUDENTS FROM NEWINGTON COLLEGE</p> <p>Introduction – <b>Andrew Carrlline</b></p>   |
| 5:25pm | <p>Closing Remarks &amp; Vote of Thanks</p> <p><b>Catherine Fritz-Kallish</b>, Co-Founder &amp; Managing Director, GAP<br/>Director, ICDP</p>  |
| 5:30pm | <i>Close</i>   |



## SPEAKERS PROFILE

### Andrew Carriline

**Non-Executive Director, Kina Securities  
Chair, Pacific Connect Business Council**

Andrew is an experienced business executive, commercially astute and highly skilled at operating successfully in regulated environments. After a long career at Westpac, he has recently built a portfolio of non-executive and advisory roles in the commercial and not-for-profit sectors and is engaged in the start-up community. Among other roles, he is currently a Non-executive director at Kina Securities Limited and GRC Solutions Pty Limited, Non-executive director of the Human Rights Law Centre and Chair of the Business Advisory Council of the International Centre for Democratic Partnerships (ICDP). At Westpac, Andrew spent most of the last decade in senior risk roles, as the Acting Group Chief Risk Officer for 18 months during the GFC and then seven years as the Chief Risk Officer for the Westpac Institutional Bank. Before his focus on pure risk roles, Andrew practised corporate law in the public and private sector and held a number of senior legal and operational roles in Westpac. Andrew is inquisitive and passionate, highly motivated by ideas, strategy, politics, technology and the key role that leadership must play in an exciting but uncertain future. He actively works to ensure that there are as few boundaries as possible between his many interests, that each interest informs the others for the benefit of all of them. Andrew holds degrees in Law and Commerce from the University of New South Wales and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company of Directors.

### Michael Collins

**Partner, Strategic Development Group**

Michael Collins is an entrepreneur and business leader with a passion for building collaborative partnerships between communities in Australia, the Pacific and around the world. Michael is a Partner at Strategic Development Group, a consulting firm providing specialist services in the fields of international development, community engagement and corporate advisory. Michael leads the company's international development work, deploying teams of world-class specialists for a wide range of clients such as the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, World Bank, CSIRO, Australian National University, Clinton Foundation and AVI, among many others. Strategic Development Group is partnering with ICDP, DFAT and Global Access Partners in the implementation of *Pacific Connect*. A former Australian diplomat, Michael's previous roles within the Australian Government included managing Australia's regional development cooperation in East Africa, strategy development for Australia's development partnership with Indonesia, and political-economic analysis. Before that, he worked in international education at the Australian National University. Fluent in *Bahasa Indonesia*, Michael has lived and worked in Kenya and Indonesia, and undertaken consulting assignments across the Pacific, Asia and Africa.

## **Catherine Fritz-Kalish**

**Co-Founder & Managing Director, GAP  
Director, ICDP**

Catherine Fritz-Kalish is Co-Founder and Managing Director of Global Access Partners (GAP) and Director of the International Centre for Democratic Partnerships (ICDP). Over the last 20 years, under Catherine's guidance, GAP has grown to be a proactive and influential network which initiates high-level discussions at the cutting edge of the most pressing commercial, social and global issues of today. Through forums, global congresses, annual summits and government advisory boards, GAP facilitates real and lasting change for its stakeholders, partners and delegates by sharing knowledge and creating input for government policy. GAP established a number of national consultative committees and taskforces which are working to shape the face of the Australian business and policy environment. Catherine's broader business experience includes coordination of a number of international initiatives as part of the annual programme for the small and medium sized enterprise unit of the OECD (Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development), at headquarters in Paris, France; marketing and brand management within all seven divisions of the George Weston Foods Group; and just prior to establishing GAP, working within the TCG Group of companies, particularly in the area of start-up incubator establishment. Catherine holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of New South Wales and a Masters of Business in International Marketing from the University of Technology, Sydney. She has three children and is passionate about helping those less fortunate. She is Chair of the Board of social justice charity Stand Up; co-founded Thread Together which provides brand new clothing to disadvantaged communities across Australia; and is part of a significant giving circle which engages whole families in the act of giving to those in need.

## **Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu**

**Special Advisor, ICDP  
Consultant, Strategic Development Group, Samoa**

Brenda is a barrister and solicitor in Apia, Samoa, who was born, raised and educated in New Zealand, and worked as a Crown Counsel with the Crown Law Office in Wellington, until curiosity about her parents' homeland led her to apply for an aid assignment in Samoa in 1996 assisting the Attorney General. She was subsequently appointed to hold that Constitutional position and served three terms in office, a total of 9 1/2 years. Brenda has worked as a legal adviser to two Governments over 20 years, and in 2007 joined private practice in Apia where she and her husband, George Latu, are partners in a local firm, Latu Lawyers. Latu Lawyers is styled as a specialist commercial and banking firm but offers the full range of legal services (particularly in their ever-burgeoning pro bono practice). Brenda is also a Consultant with Strategic Development Group and is a Special Adviser to ICDP.



**Peter Kenilorea Jr**  
**Solomon Islands**

Peter Kenilorea Jnr has previously held the position of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade in the Solomon Islands government and was International Civil Servant with the United Nations Secretariat in New York. From 2000-2017, he held positions in the UN Office of Legal Affairs, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the UN Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the UN Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States. From 1996-2000, Peter was employed by the Solomon Islands Government, serving in the Attorney-General's Chambers and from 1994-1995, he was employed by Jennifer Corrin Barrister & Solicitor. Peter has obtained an LLB from the University of Waikato in New Zealand which he attended in 1991-1994. He also obtained an LLM in International Law from the University of Nottingham in the UK which he attended in 1997-1998.

**Brian Mangi**  
**Network Administrator, ICT Department, Solomon Islands National University**

Being an IT enthusiast, Brian started his career by pursuing an IT degree from the University of the South Pacific. After graduating from university in 2011, Brian teamed up with an ISP start-up as a network engineer. His role was to research wireless broadband technologies that provide high-speed internet. In 2014, Brian left the ISP start-up and co-founded an advertising agency. As the Managing Director, his role was to oversee day-to-day operations and guide the direction of the company. In 2015, Brian started a Freelance IT Consultancy business to assist local clients with IT support consultations and IT projects. In 2017, Brian was selected to join the Solomon Islands National University as a Network Administrator in the university's ICT department.

**Nadia Meredith-Hunt**  
**Chief Executive Officer, KVAConsult, Samoa**

Nadia Meredith-Hunt has over 15 years professional work experience, including seven years within the Government of Samoa (Ministry of Finance & Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade) and ten years as a Senior Consultant and CEO with KVAConsult. Nadia holds a Masters degree in International Business, Bachelor of Commerce & Management (International Business). Her experience includes high-level policy development and project management, with particular expertise in public sector policy and finance, international trade, aid development coordination, climate change, private sector business development and communicating clients' complex needs into logical frameworks. Nadia is an avid reader and a strong advocate for lifelong learning.

## **Emmanuel Narokobi**

### **Managing Director Masalai Communications Papua New Guinea**

Emmanuel Narokobi is the Managing Director of Masalai Communications, a digital media services company based in Port Moresby. Upon completing a Bachelors Degree in Law at the University of Papua New Guinea, he ventured into the digital media world by starting his company which has built websites and databases for companies such as Exxon Mobil PNG and Digicel. Emmanuel also created and produced a national TV talk show called *Tanim Graun* and pioneered SMS services and digital signage in PNG. More recently, after being accepted into the PNG Start-Up incubator program Kumul Game Changers, Emmanuel is now working on a Vegetable Supply Chain start-up and Financial Inclusion project with PNG's largest retail group.

## **The Hon. Christopher Pyne**

### **Minister for Defence Leader of the House Member for Sturt Australian Government**

In 1993, at the age of 25, Christopher Pyne was elected to the House of Representatives for the seat of Sturt. Christopher is the Minister for Defence and Leader of the House of Representatives. In his time in Parliament, Christopher was also Minister for Defence Industry, responsible for delivering the \$200 billion build-up of Australia's military capability, the largest in our peacetime history. he has also served as Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, developing and delivering the National Innovation and Science Agenda, a transformative economic plan to encourage Australians to embrace risk and commercialise their ideas. Spending two years as Minister for Education and Training, Christopher, amongst other things, reformed the National Curriculum, introduced compulsory literacy and numeracy testing for Australian teaching graduates and expanded phonics teaching in remote schools in northern Australia. In addition to these Cabinet positions he has also served as Minister for Ageing and Parliamentary Secretary for Health in the Howard Government. As Parliamentary Secretary for Health he founded "*headspace: the Youth Mental Health Initiative*" in 2006. Christopher is the author of "*A Letter to my Children*", published by Melbourne University Press in 2015. Before entering Parliament, Christopher practised as a solicitor. Christopher is a member of many community, social, and sporting groups in his electorate, and is an Adelaide Crows Ambassador and supporter of the Norwood Redlegs Football Club! Christopher is married to Carolyn and is the proud father of Eleanor, Barnaby, Felix and Aurelia.



### **Michelle Rowland MP**

#### **Australian Shadow Minister for Communications**

#### **Member for Greenway**

Michelle was elected to the House of Representatives in 2010 as the Member for Greenway. Prior to entering Parliament, she was a senior lawyer specialising in competition and regulation in the telecommunications, media and technology sectors. In 2013, she was appointed Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multiculturalism, and Shadow Assistant Minister for Communications. In October 2015, Michelle was elevated to the Shadow Cabinet and appointed the Shadow Minister for Small Business and Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multiculturalism. Michelle was re-elected at the July 2016 election and appointed Shadow Minister for Communications. Michelle has served as a Councillor and Deputy Mayor of Blacktown City Council, Chair of Screen NSW, and a Director of the Western Sydney Area Health Service. Michelle is married to Michael and they have two young daughters, Octavia and Aurelia. Michelle is passionate about affording everyone, regardless of their background, equality of opportunity.

### **The Hon. Afamasaga Lepuia'i Rico Tupa'i**

#### **Minister for Communications and Information Technology**

#### **Government of Samoa**

The Hon. Afamasaga Lepuia'i Rico Tupa'i was appointed Samoa's Minister of Communications and Information Technology after his election as a Member of Parliament in March 2016. Prior to the parliamentary elections, he was Managing Director of Skylite, a Samoa and Pacific-based media agency. The company works with international media companies such as One News, Australia Channel 9 and BBC, capturing on video and reporting on newsworthy issues for international dissemination. The Hon. Afamasaga worked for the Samoa Public Service for about 15 years, mainly with the Department of Broadcasting, and other government media production studios. He was also Board Director for MaiTV in Fiji, a TV company he set up with friends in the industry, which is now operating as pay TV CLICK in Papua New Guinea. The Hon. Afamasaga was also Regional Commercial Brand Manager for Digicel Pacific in its roll-out in PNG, Tonga, Fiji and Vanuatu from 2007 to 2009. In 2010, he was Commercial and Brand Consultant for Bmobile, a telecommunications company in the Solomon Islands. The Hon. Afamasaga was the Chairman of Renewable Energy Solution, a new start-up in renewable energy in Samoa which involved some of the country's most prominent business community.

## **Dr Ian Watt AC**

**Chair, ICDP**

**Director, O'Connell Street Associate**

Dr Ian J Watt AC has had a long career as one of Australia's most distinguished public servants, with nearly 20 years at the highest levels of the public service. His most recent and most senior appointment was as Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and head of the Australian Public Service, a position he held from 2011 until the end of 2014. Prior to that, Dr Watt AC was Secretary of the Departments of Defence; Finance; and Communications, Information Technology and the Arts between 2001 and 2011. Before that, he was Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Dr Watt is Chair of BAE Systems Australia and Chair of the International Centre for Democratic Partnerships. He serves on the Boards of Citigroup Pty Ltd, Smartgroup Corporation, Australian Governance Masters Index Fund Limited, the Grattan Institute (University of Melbourne), O'Connell Street Associates Pty Ltd and CEDA, and is a Member of the Male Champions of Change. Dr Watt is also a Member of the Melbourne School of Government Advisory Board at the University of Melbourne, a Fellow of ANZSOG, and Senior Adviser to Flagstaff Partners.

## **Prof Ian Young AO**

**Director, ICDP**

**Kernot Professor of Engineering, University of Melbourne**

Prof Ian Young AO has had a career that has spanned both senior Higher Education administration and scientific research. He is presently Kernot Professor of Engineering at the University of Melbourne. Prior to this appointment he held the administrative roles of Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University and Vice-Chancellor of Swinburne University of Technology. During 2014 and 2015, Prof Young was Chair of the Group of Eight. When he retired from ANU in 2016, he was the second longest serving Vice-Chancellor in Australia. In 2012, he was awarded an Order of Australia (AO) for his services to Higher Education and research. Prof Young is a Fellow of the Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering and an Honorary Fellow of Engineers Australia. His research interests concern wind generated ocean waves. He has an extensive publication record in areas such as the physics of air-sea interaction, the numerical modelling of waves, finite depth waves, satellite remote sensing and ocean wind and wave climate. In recent years, his research has concentrated on the use of satellite measurements of the ocean to understand changes in wind and wave climates on a global scale. Prof Young presently holds a number of external roles including: Chair of the Board VERNet Pty Ltd.; Chair of the Board of CloudCampus Pty Ltd.; Chair Education Advisory Board of Cluey Pty Ltd.; Chair Advisory Committee of Centre of Excellence in Gravitational Waves; Board Member International Centre for Democratic Partnerships, Chief Executive Conviro Pty Ltd.; Member, Questacon Advisory Committee; Board Member, Melbourne University Publishing.



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## ENDNOTES

- 1 <https://www.fpwhitepaper.gov.au/>
- 2 Originated in international diplomacy, the 'Second Track' brings together experts from relevant sectors, including business, academia, non-government organisations and consumer groups as well as government, to leverage the good will and common interests of those involved to find and implement practical solutions. The process complements the formal 'track one' of government policy-making and encourages an open-minded, altruistic and optimistic approach. The term 'Track Two Diplomacy' was coined by Joseph Montville in 1981; Foreign Policy, Montville & Davidson, US; <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/06/20/track-ii-diplomacy-a-short-history>
- 3 [http://www.ws.undp.org/content/samoa/en/home/operations/projects/democratic\\_governance/together-for-a-digital-pacific0.html](http://www.ws.undp.org/content/samoa/en/home/operations/projects/democratic_governance/together-for-a-digital-pacific0.html)
- 4 [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314281757\\_A\\_Study\\_of\\_ICT\\_Use\\_for\\_Service\\_Delivery\\_in\\_the\\_Public\\_Sector\\_of\\_Palau\\_Samoa\\_Kiribati\\_and\\_the\\_Solomon\\_Islands](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314281757_A_Study_of_ICT_Use_for_Service_Delivery_in_the_Public_Sector_of_Palau_Samoa_Kiribati_and_the_Solomon_Islands)
- 5 Ibid.

