

New Ideas, New Connections

PACIFIC@CONNECT IDEAS EXCHANGE

Hosted by ICDP and Global Access Partners
18-19 September 2019, NSW Parliament House



Communiqué and Report of Proceedings



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DISCLAIMER: This report summarises the proceedings of the Pacific Connect Ideas Exchange "*New Ideas, New Connections*", held on 18-19 September 2019 in Sydney, Australia by ICDP in association with Global Access Partners. The report represents a range of views and interests of the individuals and organisations participating in the event. They are personal opinions that do not necessarily reflect those of the organisers and sponsors of the event.

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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 *Pacific Connect Ideas Exchange* at NSW Parliament House on 18-19 September 2019.

The event was the culmination of ICDP's activities over the previous twelve months in strengthening Australian and Pacific people-to-people links through a series of meetings, workshops and Dialogues held in the region under the banner of *Pacific Connect*. Through these engagements, ICDP works with established and emerging leaders from the Pacific and Australia to help facilitate longer-term connections.

The purpose of the *Ideas Exchange* was to bring the most active members of the *Pacific Connect* Community to Sydney to share new ideas, discuss progress on current projects and broaden their personal and professional networks. It focused on the potential of digital technologies to drive sustainable development and business opportunities in the Pacific.

The event assembled a diverse and engaged audience of **over 60 participants** from Australia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. The programme included keynote addresses from members of parliament and political leaders, updates by *Pacific Connect* Community members, project presentations and panel discussions. Proceedings were facilitated by **Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu**, Special Advisor of ICDP and Consultant with Strategic Development Group in Samoa, and **Michael Pilbrow**, Co-Founder of Strategic Development Group and *Pacific Connect's* implementation partner.

At the opening dinner on Wednesday, 18 September 2019 in the Strangers Function Room of NSW Parliament House, participants welcomed the announcement of DFAT's renewal of their contract with ICDP for a further three years (2019-2022) and increased support for project development.

The dinner's guest speaker **Ms Liesl Tesch AM, MP**, Member of the NSW Legislative Assembly and five-time Paralympic champion, inspired participants to embrace new challenges, expand their networks and make the most of opportunities through the power of her personal story.

The following day in the Preston Stanley Room, host **the Hon. John Ajaka MLC**, President of the NSW Legislative Council, introduced participants to the history of Australia's oldest parliament house and New South Wales' strong links with Pacific civil society.

Dr Ian Watt AC, Chair of ICDP, discussed the development of *Pacific Connect* over the past two years and its plans for the future. He outlined the role of ICDP as a powerful catalyst in creating practical projects to help cement personal as well as professional relationships which will endure long beyond the programme. The recently completed independent review of ICDP's activities will shape the evolution of *Pacific Connect* over the next twelve months to suit the needs of its Community members, and more pan-Pacific Dialogues will be held in Australia.

Participants then heard from keynote speaker and ICDP Ambassador **the Hon. Christopher Pyne**, who addressed the issue of the changing geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific and the role Australia and Pacific Island nations can play in strengthening regional security and supporting the international rule of law.

The plenary session included updates on two *Pacific Connect* Community projects – ‘*Every Building is a Classroom*’ in the Solomon Islands, presented by **Cameron Neil**, Co-founder of Red Hat Impact, and **Robertson Szetu**, Marketing Manager at Solomon Telekom; and the first *Pacific World Economic Forum Global Shapers Hub* in Samoa, introduced by ICDP Ambassador **James Fraser**. The award-winning project in Honiara exemplifies how modern technology can optimise the use of scarce resources to achieve social goals for marginalised communities, while the *Global Shapers Hub* has an important role to play in mentoring the young Pacific entrepreneurs who will drive economic growth in the region.

A panel of entrepreneurial leaders, including **Zha Agabe-Granfar**, Executive Director of VERGE – PNG, **Molly Benjamin**, Founder of Ladies Finance Club, **James Kana**, Managing Director of Ueniusu'unu Agribusiness Group, and **Georgina Naigulevu**, Senior Manager at HFC Bank, answered questions from the floor on the formation and fostering of new businesses.

After lunch, a ‘shark tank’ panel of business and government leaders reviewed seven project pitches presented by the participants:

1. *VR Samoa* – a proposal to map cultural sites and record stories and cultural lore threatened by the effects of climate change;
2. *Pacific Finds* – an e-commerce website for community groups and small businesses to promote and sell their products and services internationally;
3. *Mobile Me* – an online platform to map buildings and streets in Fiji for disability access;
4. *Less than a Container Load* – improving the transport of small shipments in the Solomon Islands;
5. *Lae Innovation Hub* – an incubator to help young entrepreneurs in Lae and regional PNG to augment their fundamental business skillsets;
6. *Yumi Wan* – a women's business support group in Vanuatu; and
7. *Kumul Garden* – a project in Port Moresby to promote healthy eating by supplying fresh produce directly to the customers' doorsteps.



Asked by facilitator **Michael Pilbrow** to describe their feelings in a single word, participants said they were 'inspired', 'challenged', 'passionate', 'optimistic', 'connected' and 'committed'. They were encouraged to contact at least one project after the event through Slack and offer support through social media.

In her closing remarks, **Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu** underlined the educational value of *Pacific Connect* Dialogues and said the project pitches shared a common theme in the importance of relationships, rather than technology or money. She stressed that projects must identify their target market, offer consumers value, and build relationships in order to thrive. ICDP will offer the resources it has to help bring these ideas to fruition.

Several extra-curricular activities for Pacific guests were organised by ICDP in the lead-up to the *Ideas Exchange*, including visits to Sydney's most prominent innovation hubs – The Studio, Fishburners, the University of Sydney's *Incubate* and BlueChilli's *SheStarts*. ICDP also arranged several mentoring sessions and a project pitch workshop facilitated by **Cameron Neil**. A group of Pacific guests also attended *A Vision for Australia: GAP 10th Annual Economic Summit 'Beyond Education: Lifelong Learning for Australia's Future'*, held in the NSW Legislative Assembly Chamber on 20 September.

Building on the success of the *Ideas Exchange* and feedback from participants, ICDP will continue to evolve to broaden and deepen relationships between emerging leaders in Australia and the Pacific. It will work with individuals and organisations from the six target Pacific countries by:

- ▶ **Connecting individuals** – via introductions, Dialogues, alumni networking events, online promotion, referrals, follow-up activities including funding pitches and project support, and specialist IT discussions;
- ▶ **Capacity building** – through project development, technical workshops, informal and formal practice pitches, mentoring, social media engagement, study tours to experience Australia, support and advice.

ICDP's vision for *Pacific Connect* is to further expand Australia's relationships in the Pacific, with a particular focus on women, and apply digital technology to support sustainable development and capacity building.

The next *Ideas Exchange* is scheduled for 16-17 September 2020 at NSW Parliament House.





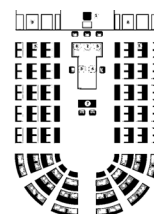
2019 Ideas Exchange in a Nutshell

LOCATION

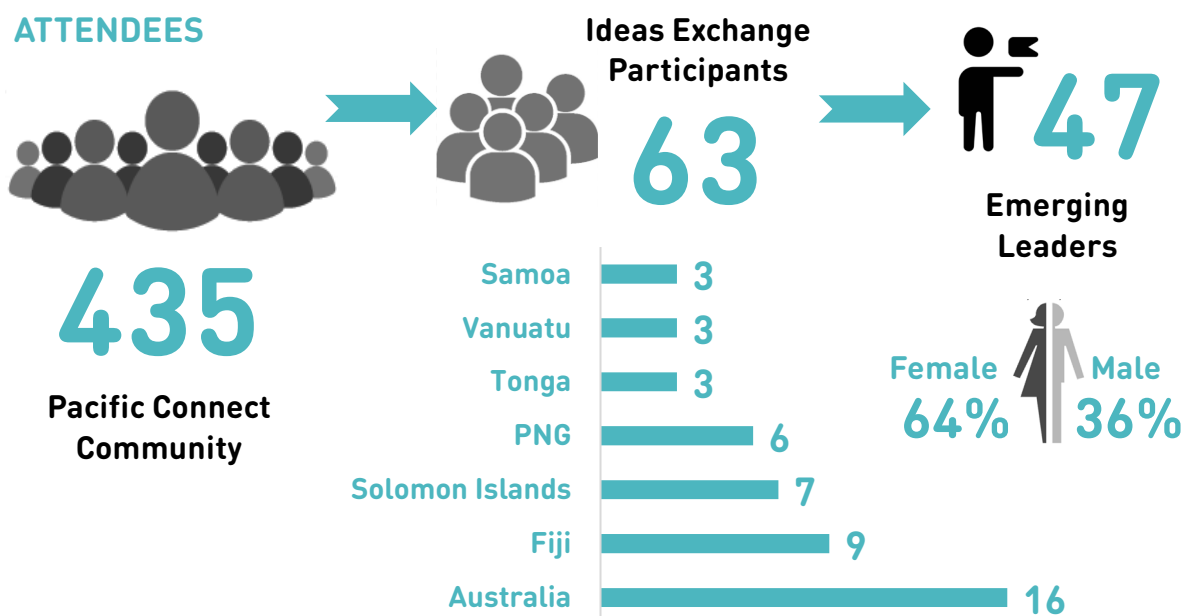
NSW Parliament House
(Australia's oldest Parliament House)



GAP's 10th Annual
Economic Summit
NSW Legislative
Assembly Chamber



ATTENDEES



ENGAGEMENT FORMAT



Plenary Session
Leaders Panel
Project Presentations

Group Discussions
Project Pitch Workshop



Study Tours
Hosted Dinners & Lunches
Informal Networking

SPEAKERS

13



KEYNOTES

Hon John Ajaka MLC
Liesl Tesch AM MP
Hon Christopher Pyne

MENTORSHIP



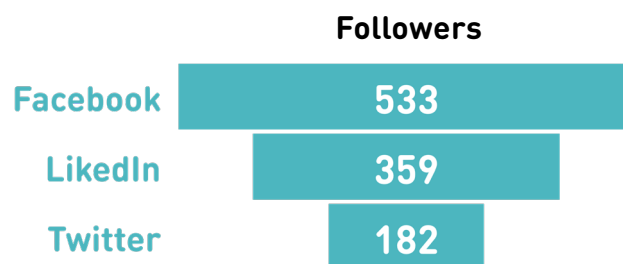
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Emerging Leaders



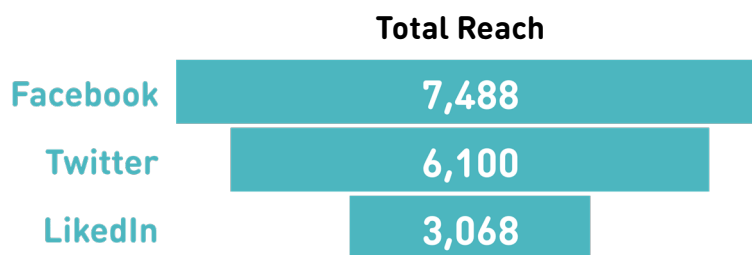
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

SOCIAL



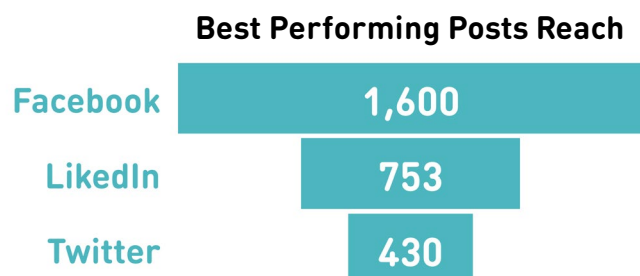
515

Facebook Likes



453

Slack Messages



@Pacific_Connect
#Digital Pacific



Communiqué

1. We, the delegates of the *Pacific Connect* Ideas Exchange, met in the Preston Stanley Room at NSW Parliament House on Wednesday, 18 September and Thursday, 19 September 2019, 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). We congratulate ICDP, GAP and their hosts and supporters for delivering an outstanding event.
2. We are delighted that over 60 participants from Fiji, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu and Australia were able to join the dialogue, and congratulate the organisers for assembling such a diverse group of emerging leaders from across the Pacific with expertise in a broad range of sectors.
3. We thank DFAT for renewing their support of ICDP for a further three years and look forward to its activities continuing to evolve to broaden and deepen relationships between emerging leaders in Australia and the Pacific. We appreciate the holding of *Pacific Connect* Dialogues in Brisbane as well as the Pacific, and the increased support offered for project development.
4. We appreciate the work of Dr Ian Watt AC, Simone Pensko, the ICDP Board, and staff members of ICDP and GAP in building the *Pacific Connect* Community and continuing to develop its activities in Australia and across the Pacific.
5. We were moved by the opening address delivered by Liesl Tesch AM, MP and were inspired by the fortitude she has shown in overcoming adversity. We will endeavour to be equally proactive in making contacts, seeking partners and grasping opportunities of our own. We felt 'inspired', 'challenged', 'passionate', 'optimistic', 'connected' and 'committed' by the opening night's dinner.
6. We thank the Hon. John Ajaka MLC for welcoming us to the oldest state parliament in the country and agree that developing security, trading, diplomatic, cultural and sporting links will benefit both Australia and Pacific Island nations.
7. We were enlightened by the Hon. Christopher Pyne's incisive assessment of the regional security situation and the need to support the international rule of law. Unity between allies and engagement with China offer the best hope of a peaceful and prosperous future for all in the region.
8. We were inspired by the presenters of the *Every Building is a Classroom* project, Cameron Neil and Robertson Szetu, and their mission to utilise suitable buildings to meet learning needs in the Solomon Islands. The project exemplifies how modern technology can optimise the use of scarce resources to pursue beneficial social goals for marginalised communities.

9. We welcome the launch of the first *Pacific World Economic Forum Global Shapers Hub* in Samoa, an initiative championed by James Fraser, and look forward to the creation of similar communities in PNG and other Pacific nations. These hubs can play an important role in encouraging and mentoring the young entrepreneurs who will drive economic growth in the future.
10. We drew valuable lessons from the panel of entrepreneurs including Zha Agabe-Granfar, Molly Benjamin, James Kana and Georgina Naigulevu, who answered our questions on the forming and fostering of new businesses. We share their ambition to pursue social goals through business means and applaud their spirit of enterprise and self-reliance. We appreciate the value of building relationships in business, discovering and meeting client needs and the need to develop culturally appropriate banking solutions.
11. We were intrigued by the proposal by *VR Samoa* to map cultural sites and record stories and cultural lore threatened by the effects of climate change. The safeguarding of traditional culture through digital technology offers exciting opportunities to both preserve and disseminate Pacific culture.
12. We believe in the potential of *Pacific Finds* to help small vendors and handicraft makers in the region sell authentic products and experiences to tourists and foreign consumers. The lack of accessible and convenient online sales platforms hampers economic development in the region, and *Pacific Finds* seeks to offer a practical and scalable solution.
13. We support much needed measures to improve access and support for people with disabilities in the Pacific and so were interested in the *Mobile Me* proposal to map buildings and streets for people with disabilities in Suva, Fiji. We are convinced that this approach could have wider applications across urban areas as well as encouraging more tourists with disabilities to visit and explore the region.
14. We understand the potential for *Less than a Container Load* solution to help small-scale farmers and growers export their goods more effectively. We wish the initial project with cacao farmers in the Solomon Islands well, and hope the logistical and market problems they face will be eased by this innovative and practical solution.
15. We recognise the desire of educated young people in PNG to create their own businesses and economic opportunities. We therefore back the creation of the *Lae Innovation Hub* and hope that similar schemes will help unlock young people's talents across the Pacific.
16. We were entranced by the proposed *Yumi Wan* women's business support group and back its aim to encourage and empower business women in Vanuatu. We wish its initial events well and trust that local women, and their male supporters, will find the advice they need from similar groups in the region to thrive and succeed.



17. We were moved by the circumstances surrounding the *Kumul Garden* project and impressed by the resilience and business sense of its founder. Home grocery deliveries are an increasing feature of Australian cities, and similar schemes should find a place in Pacific towns.
18. We thank Dr Ian Watt AC, Michael Pilbrow and Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu for facilitating an enjoyable and enlightening event and will endeavour to take its positive, practical approach to our own projects in the future. We applaud the efforts of ICDP in organising this and other activities and will continue to work as part of the *Pacific Connect* community to build ever strong and closer relationships with Australia and each other.
19. We greatly enjoyed the visits to Sydney's most prominent innovation hubs and mentorship and personal development opportunities organised by ICDP as part of the *Pacific Connect* Ideas Exchange. Inspired by these presentations and projects, we look forward to the challenges to come. We are passionate about these issues and committed to tackling them together. Our greatest asset is our connections to each other, and our optimism that change can be achieved by our own hearts, minds and hands.



Proceedings

Opening Dinner, 18 September 2019

Welcome & Introduction

Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu welcomed guests and supporters from across the Pacific and paid her respects to the traditional owners of the land. She acknowledged Ms Liesl Tesch AM, MP and representatives from ICDP, GAP and DFAT, before offering a prayer for the success of the *Ideas Exchange* and the safety of its participants.

Dr Ian Watt AC was pleased by the presence of many *Pacific Connect* Dialogue participants and praised their work on a range of projects. He thanked the staff, advisors and funders of ICDP and said its activities will continue to evolve in the light of its recent review of operations.

Participants welcomed the announcement of a further three years of support from DFAT for the *Pacific Connect* programme. Dr Watt outlined the sporting, political and charitable achievements of Ms Tesch and invited her to deliver the keynote address.

Keynote Address

Ms Liesl Tesch AM MP Member of the NSW Legislative Assembly

Ms Tesch welcomed guests to Australia's oldest parliament and thanked DFAT for extending support for ICDP. She related her personal story to inspire participants to embrace new challenges, expand their networks and make the most of opportunities. She advised them to make contacts and ask for what they need, without fear of being rejected. She revealed her goal to sail around the world and encouraged guests to be vocal about their own plans and objectives.



Ms Tesch described her unorthodox childhood in New Zealand and the cycling accident in 1988 which damaged her spinal cord at the age of 19. She took up wheelchair basketball to aid her rehabilitation and went on to represent Australia at five Paralympic games, winning two silver medals. She became the first woman to play the sport professionally in European men's leagues, before moving back to teach geography in Woy Woy, NSW.



After witnessing the limited facilities available to disabled athletes in South America and South Africa, Ms Tesch co-created the *Sport Matters* charity to donate equipment to athletes in Australia, Asia and the Pacific and encourage physical participation for people with disabilities. She took up sailing in 2009 and completed the Sydney-Hobart race in 2011, before winning gold medals at the 2012 London and 2016 Rio Paralympics with Daniel Fitzgibbon. She urged participants to follow their dreams, regardless of setbacks, as she had in her eventually successful pursuit of an Olympic gold medal. She now plans to create a Paralympic mentoring scheme to help others achieve their own sporting ambitions.

Ms Tesch said she was elected as the Labor member for Gosford in the NSW Legislative Assembly at a by-election in April 2017. She encouraged guests to follow their heart, make the most of their time, and take the chance to reach out to others to achieve their dreams.

Dr Watt thanked Ms Tesch and underlined the importance of ‘stepping over the edge’ to pursue projects with the ICDP.

Plenary Session, 19 September 2019

Pacific Welcome & Prayer

Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu acknowledged the Hon. John Ajaka MLC, the Hon. Christopher Pyne and facilitator Michael Pilbrow, and welcomed attendees from across the Pacific to the plenary session of the *Ideas Exchange*, before leading attendees in prayer.

Michael Pilbrow paid respect to the traditional owners of the land, outlined the day’s schedule and explained the Chatham House rule of non-attribution. Participants agreed they had felt ‘inspired’, ‘challenged’, ‘passionate’, ‘optimistic’, ‘connected’ and ‘committed’ by the previous night’s dinner.

Welcome Address

The Hon. John Ajaka MLC **President, NSW Legislative Council**

Mr Ajaka welcomed participants to the NSW Parliament and noted that the Solomon Island’s Parliament is twinned with NSW. He traced the history of the NSW Legislative Council and its role as the ‘house of review’. He recalled his visits to Bougainville and the Solomon Islands and praised the breadth and depth of security,



trading, diplomatic, cultural and sporting links between Australia and Pacific nations. He said ICDP Dialogues and other multidisciplinary forums offer industry and private groups unique opportunities to collaborate on ideas and innovations, and thanked participants for their endeavours.

Pacific Connect Year in Review

Dr Ian Watt AC **Director, ICDP**

Dr Watt discussed the evolution of the ICDP and its future plans. The organisation was established to deliver DFAT's *Pacific Connect* programme, and began operations in October 2017. Alongside organising its own affairs, it began to forge links in the region, with exploratory visits by ICDP Board members and staff to meet emerging and established leaders in a number of Pacific Island nations.



Early *Pacific Connect* Dialogues were held in PNG, Fiji and Samoa, and a further eight Dialogues, two workshops and an annual forum were held over the following year. Over 430 people are now involved in ICDP activities and receive a monthly *Pacific Connect* newsletter. Two hundred and eight emerging leaders have attended the Dialogues, 59 from Australia and 149 from Pacific islands, with 56% of the latter being female. ICDP has a website, blog and social media accounts, while alumni use and manage their own networks for continued communication. The Dialogues have generated 79 project proposals, 20 of which are active, and five have already won funding. ICDP also helped launch a World Economic Forum's *Global Shapers Hub* in Samoa, and will support plans for further developments in the region.

ICDP's model has evolved over the past twelve months, and more emphasis will now be placed on post-Dialogue activities. Dialogues are now held in Australia as well as offshore, and all-women events in Brisbane proved highly successful. ICDP has established itself a powerful catalyst in creating and strengthening links between emerging leaders in Pacific Island nations and Australia. Practical projects help cement personal as well as professional relationships which will endure long beyond the programme. This, in turn, will help create extensive networks of contacts and mentors.

The recently completed independent review of ICDP's activities will shape additional revisions over the next twelve months to suit the needs of its participants. More pan-Pacific dialogues will be held in Brisbane, as well as at least one individual event in each target country, as they offer greater scope for additional experiences for Pacific delegates. More support will be offered after Dialogues are held to support the development and



financing of projects. ICDP will help participants practise project pitches, and a small pool of seed funding will become available. More workshops and alumni events will be organised, and ICDP staff will offer consulting support on existing projects.

ICDP will continue to work on information and communication technology (ICT) and digital themes in the Pacific and bring Australians and Pacific Islanders together through the 'Second Track' process to pursue economic growth and opportunities.

The last two years have been a fascinating journey for ICDP thanks to the emerging leaders it works with. Dr Watt underlined his determination to maintain and grow the *Pacific Connect* community, before introducing the Hon. Christopher Pyne as the session's keynote speaker.

He noted Mr Pyne's long ministerial career and the role of security in the Australian Government's Pacific Step-up. Mr Pyne was instrumental in the founding of the International Centre for Democratic Partnerships and will become the third ICDP Ambassador at the start of 2020.

Keynote Address

"Pacific Island Nations and the changing geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific"

The Hon. Christopher Pyne ICDP Ambassador

Mr Pyne recalled how his experience with the National Democratic Institute in the US had inspired the creation of ICDP, and hoped to participate in regional *Pacific Connect* dialogues in the future. He analysed the issue of great power rivalry in the region and the role which Australia and Pacific Island countries can play in tipping the balance between constructive or destructive outcomes. *Pacific Connect* offers a way for Australia and its South Pacific neighbours to work as equals in strengthening civil society by listening to and learning from each other.



- **Australia and the USA**

The annual meeting between American and Australian foreign and defence ministers, last held in August 2019 in Sydney, underlines their nations' strong bond of mutual interest. Indeed, Australia's only treaty relationship is with the USA. The US Secretary of Defence was blunt in his public statement at the event, warning of a new era of strategic competition and admitting the USA has been 'asleep at the switch', while China militarised the South China Sea.

- **USA and China**

The USA and China are the two most powerful countries in the world today. Russia maintains a large military by spending a much higher proportion of its GDP on defence, despite having an economy little larger than Australia's. Japan's economy rivals that of China and the USA, but it does not compete militarily. India has a large population, but currently lacks China's economic and military might. The USA has increased its activity in the Indo-Pacific, signalling a strategic shift to contain China, and expects its allies to do the same.

Apart from a brief period from the mid-19th to late 20th century, China was the dominant power in East Asia for more than two thousand years. Chinese merchants may have discovered Australia long before Europeans. China is an ancient, sophisticated and populous society, which is well on the way to becoming the largest economy on earth and already has the second strongest military. It naturally sees itself as a great power and is reasserting that status today.

The USA became a Pacific power when it annexed the Philippines in 1898, and its power now extends across the region in terms of island possessions and strong relationships with Japan, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and other democratic allies. The US and its allies have fought wars in the Indo-Pacific to protect freedom, and it is not about to withdraw from a region where it has so much history and retains strong political allegiances.

- **The importance of the Indo-Pacific**

Other nations in the region are dwarfed by these two powers, but if they act together, they can have a significant influence. Many Indo-Pacific nations have thriving economies and enduring alliances they can use to influence the region's great powers in a constructive way, rather than resign themselves to being bystanders. Asia has eight of the 10 most populous countries in the world, and half the world's population. It has 12 of the G20, but the Pacific also has some of the world's smallest nations. Nine of the 10 busiest ports are in the Indo-Pacific region, but alongside the great wealth that trade generates remain pockets of abject poverty. The wealth of South Korea can be contrasted with the failure of North Korea's insular and authoritarian regime, for example, but other ostensibly communist countries have adopted open markets and respect the international rules-based order.

Full employment, fair wages and taxes and better working conditions should be the norm in every nation, and Australia can help set a positive example to its neighbours. There remain major opportunities to improve health, prosperity, education, housing, employment and wellbeing in the region, including a shared response to climate change, an issue which will particularly affect the South Pacific.



- **Defending the rules-based order**

Development goals can best be achieved through upholding the international rules-based order. America has defended that order over the last century, despite not joining the League of Nations Woodrow Wilson helped create. The League was the first attempt by the global community to supersede the balance of power diplomacy which had characterised European relations for centuries and triggered the cataclysm of the First World War. Although the League of Nations failed, Bretton Woods, the United Nations, World Bank and APEC have since helped developing countries raise themselves from poverty, and billions of people have benefited as a result.

Nations of the Indo-Pacific look to the USA to safeguard an order which has benefited them both economically and socially but is now being challenged by the rise of China. China itself has been a major beneficiary of the rules-based order, as it has modernised its economy and become an important player in global trade. Indo-Pacific nations must therefore continue to convince China of its benefits.

At a recent ASEAN meeting, China's defence minister tried to reassure members that it wanted to work with them to maintain peace and improve outcomes. However, Indo-Pacific countries must underline that these aims are best achieved through shared goals and mutual respect. The militarisation of the South China Sea causes concern across the region, as all nations depend on freedom of navigation for trade. Other countries in the South China Sea have competing claims over its resources, and Australia expects all nations to uphold the international conventions on the Law of the Sea and respect international arbitration, rather than embark on unilateral action.

- **Constructive engagement with China**

Attempts to contain China are in no-one's interest, while engagement should benefit everyone. Free trade, open and transparent markets, financial regulation and international travel help create a more peaceful and integrated region. Regional countries, such as Australia, would rather put their efforts and resources into regional trade and development agreements than confrontation. However, Australia is a staunch friend of likeminded countries in the region and takes its regional security responsibilities seriously. It will continue to encourage its neighbours to back words with action and ensure that all countries work together in a respectful way.

- **Australia's Pacific Step-up**

The Australian Government's Pacific Step-up is a significant whole-of-government effort to increase engagement in the region. It builds on the \$1.5 billion Pacific Patrol Boat programme, which will see Australia give 21 Guardian patrol boats to Pacific Island nations and East Timor to help them protect their waters from illegal fishing and drug and people smuggling. The Step-up includes a range of schemes to improve training, as well as a new ship to respond to humanitarian needs and an annual meeting of regional defence and police chiefs. Australia has an extensive alumni network in the region and recognises the power of these personal links in keeping national relationships strong.

Australia will also open five new embassies or high commissions in the South Pacific, becoming the only country to have direct representation in every capital. As well as offering resources to improve Pacific nations' police, defence and infrastructure, Australia hopes the funding of internet cables will encourage regional economic growth and employment.

Pacific Connect plays an important role in strengthening civil society in the region, and Australia will continue to strengthen its economic relations with ASEAN and individual countries, as well as defence and intelligence links with its allies.

Discussion

Michael Pilbrow thanked Mr Pyne for his address and opened the floor for discussion.

Australia remains the largest aid donor in the Pacific, providing half the region's aid. Much of that goes to health, education, homelessness and disability. Disability and inclusion are an integral part of Australia's aid and engagement programme, and a new programme will offer both able-bodied and disabled secondary school students in the region a chance to study in Australia.

Climate change is an area of importance. Given Australia's reliance on coal for energy and exports, universities and other institutions should work on solutions whose economic impact Australia can accept, given the existential threat facing the Pacific islands.

A guest from Vanuatu welcomed the Pacific Step-up and the recent visit of the Junior Matildas football team to Vanuatu as it has raised the profile of women's sport.

Michael Pilbrow thanked the participants for their contributions and brought the session to a close.





Project Presentations

“Every Building is a Classroom”

Cameron Neil, Co-Founder, Red Hat Impact
Robertson Szetu, Marketing Manager, Solomon Telekom

Michael Pilbrow introduced presentations on successful *Pacific Connect* programmes.

Robertson Szetu outlined the purpose of the *Every Building is a Classroom* platform to list buildings in the Solomon Islands which could be used as classrooms or learning spaces. The lack of suitable learning facilities is a common problem across the region, meaning that children who do less well in tests in primary school can drop out of education due to a lack of suitable facilities.



The platform will flag idle rooms, floors or buildings, such as unused classrooms, church halls or even homes, as available for teaching purposes. This should increase educational capacity without additional infrastructure spending. The Solomon Islands has 300 inhabited islands, in contrast to the larger land masses of PNG, Fiji and Samoa. Seventy per cent of its population is under 30, increasing the demand on its resource constrained education services.



Cameron Neil said the idea of an ‘Airbnb’ for education had sprung from an ICDP workshop held in Honiara in November 2018, which had discussed digital education to improve employment outcomes. An initial application for a DFAT grant scheme was made in December that year, led by the Melbourne company Common Code, and the project was shortlisted in January 2019. It was one of four winners of DFAT’s *Technology for Development* award in April 2019. DFAT understands the importance of engaging private enterprise in the Pacific, and the grant safeguards against the risks that small Australian companies would otherwise face. The grants support new technology and business ideas for a year, and a further presentation on progress and social impact to the Department in late October will determine next steps for this project.

Participants were shown how the *Every Building is a Classroom* website describes buildings' location, facilities, pricing and characteristics, and the filters which allow education and training agencies to search for internet and disability access and other attributes. The platform will not only allow the use of existing rooms but highlight how buildings can be turned into better potential classrooms with the addition of internet, electricity, toilets, ramps and other facilities. Bookings or payments cannot be made online for the moment, but the website enables hosts to be contacted and arrangements made through phone calls or a site visit.

Two developers from Common Code are working on the platform, and the prototype has been shown to the Solomons' Ministry of Education and ICT unit, private businesses, telecom and energy providers, and *Pacific Connect* stakeholders, helping them visualise the idea. The platform will be rolled out across four or five sites in the Solomon Islands in early 2020, including Honiara. There should be five to ten buildings in each province for education providers to book, and this pilot should prove the usefulness of the idea if extended across the whole country. New features will also be added, including client user histories, and information on education and training in each area to help reduce duplication. The idea could then be rolled out in other Pacific Island nations in 2021.

The internet cable connecting Honiara to Sydney is already in place, however, public expectations of fast, cheap internet will depend on service providers delivering the domestic cabling required. Information from the *Every Building is a Classroom* portal should give internet providers more information on infrastructure needs, improving their delivery in the future. Most workshops and conferences in the Pacific are held in the capital or major towns, but this platform should allow non-government organisations (NGOs) to bring education and training to rural villages.

The pilot will prioritise providers of education and training for women and girls, and then be expanded to all demographics. More organisations delivering training in the region are being sought, as well as infrastructure and service providers. Participants were encouraged to follow the project team's social media updates, connect with its creators and publicise its work.





Global Shapers Community Hubs for Pacific Youth Empowerment

James Fraser, ICDP Ambassador

James Fraser stressed the importance of forging links with emerging leaders who have not yet attended Dialogues and said that *Pacific Connect* members outside particular projects remain vital parts of the ICDP network.

The 2018 Solomon Islands Dialogue raised the possibility of founding the World Economic Forum's *Global Shapers Hub* in the Pacific, and the first hub has been created in Samoa. It will coordinate projects outside *Pacific Connect*, but WEF goals are aligned with its development ethos. The Samoan hub's curator, **Olisana Mariner**, is concerned by climate change, and an Emmy award-winning film maker has agreed to work on a documentary on the topic.



Opportunities for other hubs are being explored in PNG and Fiji, and **Shalom Warrey** (PNG Dialogue participant) hopes they will encourage educated young people to use their skills to create sustainable livelihoods for themselves. PNG has a high rate of youth unemployment, and the hub will allow them to come together and share ideas on creating their own opportunities.

The WEF backs the proposed Port Moresby hub, and Mr Fraser encouraged participants to consider creating or supporting further hubs across the Pacific. The current curators can be contacted through Slack to offer advice, and while the hubs' users should be aged 20 to 30, people of any age can create a community. These hubs would be supported by *Pacific Connect* as well as the WEF, which will fly prospective curators to Europe to discuss details.

Entrepreneurial Leaders Panel Discussion

Zha Agabe-Granfar, Executive Director, VERGE

Molly Benjamin, Founder, Ladies Finance Club

James Kana, Managing Director, Ueniusu'unu Agribusiness Group

Georgina Naigulevu, Senior Manager, HFC Bank

Zha Agabe-Granfar, Molly Benjamin, James Kana, and Georgina Naigulevu introduced themselves and took questions from participants.

The first speaker said each attendee brought special skills to the *Pacific Connect* programme and asked the panellists when they first got their project ideas.

Georgina had been inspired by the potential of assistive technology to help people with disabilities, and said the dialogue in Fiji had helped make valuable connections. **James** had been inspired by a lecture about the potential for technology to encourage economic development in the Solomon Islands at the University of the South Pacific (USP). This led to a rural development project to help farmers navigate markets more effectively. **Molly** promoted the importance of personal financial literacy, while **Zha** spoke about a solar security lighting company she co-founded in Shanghai for export to PNG. Returning to Port Moresby, she has continued to promote digital development while raising a young family, as owning a business offers more flexibility than being employed.

Panel members were asked to discuss any non-traditional means they had used to differentiate themselves in competitive markets.

Zha recommended boot strap entrepreneurship – building a business through revenue – rather than seeking equity investors. She stressed the need to build personal relationships to secure customers in PNG, but noted that a consistent online presence and search engine optimisation are also valuable. **James** said his business was entirely online, as it offers an app to farmers in the Solomon Islands to improve their access to markets and their ability to give and receive mobile payments. **Molly** stressed the need to partner with companies and clients in a similar space, and to promote the benefits and solutions that any new service offers direct to customers. **Georgina** also focused on client needs and the importance of initial conversations to establish trust and respect. She said she had succeeded in her banking career by asking customers about their problems and offering a range of solutions to solve them, rather than trying to impose a single product from the start.





The next questioner asked about the problems created by the lack of reliable online access and payment options in the Pacific.

Georgina explained that Pacific nations lack the bank clearing systems used in other nations, but this lack of connectivity is compensated for through personal relationships. Banks in the region still physically exchange cheques twice a day, but digital solutions will gradually be adopted. **James** noted recent reforms in the banking system to reduce costs and improve services, including ANZ's development of a Pacific hub. He hoped the new internet cable to the Solomons would help mobile banking solutions develop and called on banks to encourage financial inclusion for new entrepreneurs, small firms, women and other potential customers. **Zha** said families and communities, rather than individuals, were central in PNG and offered each other mutual financial support, rather than relying on financial institutions. Many women have cash businesses or small retail outlets which are not part of the formal economy and do not want to use the formal banking sector. Women with limited education may struggle to negotiate the red tape required to set up a business and bank account, and would benefit from relationships with people who can mentor them. **Molly** noted that 60% of the economy in Vanuatu was cash-based, rather than passing through the banking system.

Another participant said global banks such as ANZ had a role to play in fostering relationships for entrepreneurs. Another guest noted that older people in the Pacific can prefer to deal with people, rather than technology: a recent survey in Vanuatu revealed that only 20% of citizens have a bank account. It can be intimidating for individuals to open a bank account, and people resent paying fees, but banks are more able to open accounts for cooperative societies and other groups. It can take people two days to travel to a bank and return home, and so encouraging the development of groups with banking access offers a better solution.

Entrepreneurs in Pacific Islands may have different needs and goals to those in Australian cities. **James** agreed with the need to find appropriate, innovative and diverse ways to support young entrepreneurs in the Solomon Islands. **Georgina** said many networks and organisations have been created by communities, and that cash options for mutual trade should be offered to allow them to collaborate with each other. **Molly** agreed with the importance of personal relationships in local business dealings, while **Zha** noted the lack of suitable jobs for the large numbers of educated young people in PNG. Over 1.5 million people hold graduate education in PNG, but there are only half a million jobs available for them. Digital connections with the rest of the world will allow them to work online and export their skills, as economic growth in the nation will always be constrained if they only sell services to each other. **Zha** said that successful support spaces tend to be created by their users, rather than imposed from outside, and that 'cookie cutter' solutions ignore PNG's complex cultural differences. Young people want to be agents of change, but uniting them to form a critical mass has proved difficult. However, there are several hubs of activity in Port Moresby to promote digital change, and similar groups could be created elsewhere.

The final question concerned the use of shared working spaces, given participants' earlier visit to Fishburners in Sydney. One member suggested that such venues in the Pacific should be safe and accessible with protected Wi-Fi to encourage their use, but **Molly** said her first planned events in Vanuatu would be held in an outdoor market to improve accessibility. **Georgina** said commercial websites were often overly complex and should be simplified to improve accessibility to users. **James** said young entrepreneurs in the Solomon Islands needed online access to mentorship, and flagged his work on appropriate solutions.

Michael Pilbrow thanked the panellists and asked them for a single piece of advice to close the session.

Georgina said digital inclusion was profitable for service suppliers, as well as equitable for users. **Molly** urged participants to make connections with people through social media, as most people are willing to help if asked. **James** said the gains of cooperation were always more than the sum of its parts, while **Zha** said entrepreneurs should take the time to understand the social realities of the communities in which they wanted to operate and identify the right people to connect with to make an impact. She urged new entrepreneurs to talk to their customers and define and solve a critical issue for them, rather than work only with their marketing teams.

Dr Ian Watt AC closed the session with a presentation of the ICDP Ambassador award to **James Fraser** for his contributions to *Pacific Connect*, and congratulated him on his new role.

Mr Fraser said ICDP had changed his perception of himself and those around him, and opened his eyes to the Pacific.





Practice Pitches

Michael Pilbrow introduced the pitch session, and the ‘shark tank’ panel reviewing the seven contenders. He urged participants to consider which proposals would benefit from their assistance and support.

VR Samoa – ‘Shifting Homes’

Climate change is a global phenomenon, and rising seas are already affecting Samoan coastal communities. It is cultural sites, and the oral histories attached to them, are also under threat and need legislative protection. Samoa is just 2,800 km² in size and has 198,000 residents, but the 500,000-strong Samoan diaspora in American and Australia cities are also vital to its economy.

VR Samoa would like to further its work in safeguarding storytelling and cultural traditions by mapping archaeological sites with Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) and other technology, linking the Samoan diaspora online and mapping human displacement.

Building a physical and digital collection of immersive stories across multiple platforms which people can share will help people understand the problem of climate change, drive legislative change and build community resilience. Creating 3D maps of Samoan cultural sites will help Samoans abroad experience their own country, while the project team will take virtual reality technology to schools and villages in Samoa to help them to create their own content.

The nine participants in the *VR Samoa* group met at the *Pacific Connect* Dialogue on Creative Industries in Samoa in 2019. They decided to aggregate their existing digital, virtual reality and storytelling schemes into the *VR Samoa* project and seek support from universities and DFAT. Several examples of their work were then shown to participants. The group has completed two of its planned five phases of work and will now concentrate on gathering stories in a specific village nominated by the University of Samoa and look to earn income from film festivals and audio books.

The ‘shark tank’ panel said the presentation had been interesting and sophisticated, and praised the progress already made. The team said they sought in-kind and financial support to achieve their objectives. The University of Samoa and a scanning company offered their services after the Dialogue, and further advice and feedback from the Pacific community regarding the expansion of the approach to other Pacific nations would be useful.



Pacific Finds

Pacific Finds looks to solve two problems.

Firstly, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and small community groups in the South Pacific lack the skills and resources they need to effectively market their products online, given the difficulty of setting up an e-commerce platform. Secondly, tourists travelling to the South Pacific can struggle to find authentic products and quality experiences.

Pacific Finds offers an online e-commerce platform for community groups and SMEs to sell goods and services online to the tourists, wholesalers, ex-pats, NGOs, cruise liners, art departments and other customers. It began as *Fiji Finds* and is now expanding to Vanuatu, Samoa and PNG under separate national names.

Labour Mobility & Digital Marketplace
Digital Trade & Labour Mobility Dialogue • 11-12 March 2019 • Port Vila, Vanuatu
Digital Marketplace & Online Services Dialogue • 11-12 March 2019 • Port Vila, Vanuatu

Pacific Connect invited Vanuatu to 2019 to further strengthen people-to-people connections between Australia and Vanuatu. In March, Connecting Networks coordinated the project, known as the Seasonal Worker Programme to help meet business demand in rural Australia and provide employment opportunities for Vanuatu. In June, Port Vila hosted the Digital Marketplace and Online Services Dialogue, where participants discussed the application for digital services to business, education and social services, with a focus on opportunities for Pacific women.

The respective Dialogues were facilitated by Dr. Ian West AC, Chair of CDF, Prof. Ian West AC, Director of CDF, Tahiti, French Polynesia, CDF Pacific Partnership Manager, Fred Samard, CEO and Director of Pacific Group, and Pacific Herman GEM, CEO of the Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation.

Project 1	Yarn WAK - Women Advisory Network	Project 2	Pacific Finds
Description	Developed out of the Digital Marketplace and online services Dialogue, Yarn WAK is a collaborative initiative to improve and empower the women of Vanuatu and the Pacific. The network explores to connect non-traditional and emerging businesses to provide a safe and inclusive space to share ideas, collaborate on projects and provide awareness for business and career opportunities in Vanuatu and the wider region.	Description	FF Find was developed by Pacific Connect as an online support platform for local SMEs to promote and sell their products internationally. Businesses can list their products and sell products using the FF Find payment gateway. FF Find and Yarn WAK will come under the umbrella of Pacific Find as a platform for the Pacific Find website, which will also include Samoa. The next stage is to promote and increase the visibility of the Pacific Find website and Vanuatu to a wider market through digital stories and short documentaries. The project also includes a network of market places for their products through innovative digital marketing and advertising the need to have and promote a wider traditional crafts among people across the region.
Progress	Since the March Dialogue, Yarn WAK has developed from just an idea into an active and growing network. A business group has been established and meetings with the Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce and Industry held to further develop the initiative. The project is progressing well and is set to be held in October 2019 before hosting an inaugural conference in early 2020.	Progress	The website is currently being built. There is potential for further collaboration with the Vanuatu Women's Advisory Network. Current needs include a member with commercial experience, an improved business model structure to incorporate regional growth, website marketing, and an improved product delivery website.

What's Next for Pacific Find?
"I was encouraged to see the amount of international support and resources that were provided to the Pacific Find project. Pacific Connect is giving me great hope for Vanuatu's future."
A Digital Marketplace Dialogue participant

"Thank you, CDF, for allowing me to attend this Dialogue. I was able to make useful connections and gain valuable insights and new ways to build on this to achieve personal and business growth."
A Digital Trade and Labour Mobility Dialogue participant

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The site generates revenue through membership fees paid by the vendors. Initial product listing is free, but silver, gold and platinum memberships offer additional services, such as social media marketing and training. Testimonials from current users show how remote and women's groups have used it to sell their products for their true value to a much wider audience. Products sold through the site are given a unique tag by their vendors, telling the story behind their creation, while a QR code can be scanned on a phone to reveal images and additional information.

The site aims to establish a clear brand and develop a sustainable business model. In the next two months it plans to add at least five more vendors in each country and extend its service to events which lack online booking capability. In two to six months' time, it aims to add filters to flag disability-friendly spaces and offer discounts and deals for tourists visiting particular countries. It will also offer a certificate of authenticity for goods. In its first incarnation as *Fiji Finds*, the high cost of shipping products overseas proved a problem, and so *Pacific Finds* will concentrate on domestic sales. It will open retail outlets at airports around the South Pacific and then shops in Australia and New Zealand. It will also print flyers for cruise ship visitors and, later, introduce online training and networking events for its members, as well as offer sample gifts for wholesalers.

Pacific Finds seeks help with branding and marketing, website development, and vendor engagement. It would like to engage people in its target countries who can travel to rural areas to promote the site and sign up new users. Business and e-commerce mentors could help it achieve its goal of covering every South Pacific nation. Its tagline is "*find culture, find adventure, find Pacific at Pacific Finds*".



The 'shark tank' panel said the group had clearly defined the problem it was trying to solve and its prospective clientele. They praised the clarity of the business model, but asked why the team had not used existing online sales platforms and what the costs were in gaining members.

Pacific Finds is specific to the region and the target market of small businesses, whereas other sites are more generalised. *Pacific Finds* offers each participating vendor a page to market their wares, and while some South Pacific SMEs use Facebook, *Pacific Finds* offers a 'one stop shop' and certifies authenticity. It is trying to use the skills and resources it already has to expand its clientele, build trust and expand its brand. It wants to grow sustainably, rather than seek large amounts of funding.

The panel praised the team's effort to train vendors in digital literacy, and asked if the group sought grants or to sell equity. The group did not seek to sell equity but will use any additional funds to increase the vendor database, pay travel expenses, meet vendors and market the site.

The panel was impressed by the team's rejection of blockchain and their adoption of user-friendly QR codes, given the ubiquity of mobile phones. They suggested that *Pacific Finds'* approach could be used in Northern Australia, and it was noted that a similar idea won a pitch to Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in PNG.

Pacific Finds is passionate about offering the benefits of modern technology to rural businesses as well as urban entrepreneurs.

Mobile Me

Mobile Me evolved from the ICDP Dialogue in Fiji, a country where 157,000 people – 13.5% of the population – live with some form of disability.

There are 1.7 million people with disabilities in the Pacific in total, and 30% live below the poverty line. *Mobile Me* is the first programme in the region to focus on this group and address their needs by mapping disability access in facilities in buildings and tourist centres and reducing street obstacles. The idea has been endorsed by the Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons, as well as Fiji's transport department and Suva City Council.

Technology Enabling Inclusiveness

Strategic Visit • 16-17 March 2019 • Suva, Fiji
Pacific Connect Dialogue • 29-30 July 2019 • Suva, Fiji



Pacific Connect returned to Fiji shores in 2019 after holding the inaugural Academic Network Dialogue in Suva last year. In March, ICDP held its strategic meeting in Suva with senior representatives from government, academia, business, IT, non-profit, assistive services and community engagement sectors. In July, 19 Pacific and Australian emerging leaders attended the Technology Enabling Inclusiveness Dialogue co-hosted by ICDP and HFC Bank. The Dialogue was facilitated by Dr Ian Watt AC, Chair of ICDP, Peter Fyfe AM, Chairman of Global Access Partners, and Saravani Menon-Andrew, CEO of Pacific Disability Forum. Participants collaborated on several projects in ICT education, accessibility mapping software and building. Speakers Dr Anna Wright, founder of BioMapz, and Kylie Minns, CEO of Motivation Australia, set the tone of action by their inspiring presentations.

Project 1	Mobile Me Map	Project 2	Digital Weavers
Description	Mobile Me Map is a three-year strategic project with three complementary segments: 1. Street-level exploration – a mapping service for people with disabilities to easily locate map services, proper footpaths and accessible tourist locations. 2. Mapping the internet – provides data to the Fiji Government to assist in the development of disability infrastructure and revision of building standards. 3. A digital marketplace for people with a disability.	Description The Garden Weavers Programme (Sundusap Solutions Fiji) has partnered with ICDP to develop an online platform, coupled with innovative digital marketing, to facilitate the effective sale of traditional grass mats from Lau.	
Progress	Since the July Dialogue, several regional associations have fully endorsed the project, including the Pacific Disability Forum and Fiji Disabled People's Federation. On 30 August, the initiative was endorsed by the Fiji Ministry for Social Welfare, Women and Poverty Alleviation. On International Day for Persons with Disabilities (3 December), Mobile Me will take to the streets of Suva to map out facilities and locations within the pilot site.	Progress Project leaders have reached an agreement with the women's representative for the Province of Lau to facilitate the development of the project in Naitasiri and Taveuni villages. The project team is in negotiations with Multi-Space for the provision of complementary services. A grant application was submitted to Fiji Women's Fund (Australia Aid) on 30 August.	
Current results	Project funding, creative logo design, IP rights, data sharing with sponsors and future stakeholders, and the development of a business model and trial strategies.	Current results <ul style="list-style-type: none">Digital marketing training for studentsRural and urban workshops to facilitate the knowledge sharing of traditional grass mat weavingDocumenting the production value chain in Lau to highlight the orders of grass mat weaving, its value chain and innovative marketing potentialDigital marketing and trading plan Within four months, the project plans to begin training, followed by research and documentation. The two-year digital marketing and trading pilot will establish sustainable and effective systems across the province.	
What Dialogue participants say	"Coming together for a common purpose is always the start. I believe with both dialogue and program support, the relationship between the Pacific, Australia and individuals can only strengthen."	"Throughout the past year I have made and developed meaningful connections with Pacific people, as well as my Australian colleagues who generously with to connect, share knowledge and experiences, and work together across industry sectors."	



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A convenient pilot site in Suva has been selected for three activities: the collection of information by students and other supporters, the mapping of buildings for disability access, and the development of e-commerce. Many tourists with disabilities visit Fiji and other Pacific Island nations, but museums and other sites can lack disability access or conveniences. Pacific nations want to adopt Australian best practice to improve disabled access, and *Mobile Me* will work with building owners to improve access in return for advertising on the maps it produces. The Fiji Roads Authority is also interested in buying the data the project collects.

Their e-commerce site will sell assistive technology, such as glasses and hearing aids, to reduce current supply problems in sourcing goods from China. It will also create jobs for people with disabilities, rather than relying on government support. Support is needed to collect information in Suva and extend the approach across the Pacific. A documentary will be made about the Suva project to encourage similar efforts across the region.

The 'shark tank' panel praised the team's identification of the problem to be solved, and suggested that building owners could be offered tax incentives by the Fiji government to participate, as online adverts might not be sufficient.

The *Mobile Me* team agreed that government assistance and the updating of building codes should be lobbied for, and while data would be free to users, institutions would be asked to pay for it. The team will work with supporters to reduce costs, and could attract major building owners by endorsing their sites if they offer the data required. Economic leverage could also be used by the friends and family of people with disabilities. While the wide range of the offering might prove a distraction, achieving measurable successes as *Mobile ME* progresses through its published roadmap and proving the concept in Suva will help the project gather momentum.

Less than a Container Load

Less than a Container Load will initially focus on improving the transport of small shipments of cacao in the Solomon Islands, but could be rolled out across the Pacific for a range of goods. The project emerged from the 2019 Honiara Dialogue on shipping and logistics, and consists of agri-business entrepreneurs and other development, technology and logistics companies, with the support of DFAT.

The Dialogue was told that for every five full shipping containers unloaded on the Solomon Islands, only one is sent out full of agricultural produce. The others are returned empty, wasting opportunities for export and increasing transport costs. The Solomon Islands has 30,000–40,000 farmers and growers in remote regions who cannot export because they cannot fill an entire shipping container, or coordinate joint freight services effectively. Export agents face severe logistical problems in arranging transport, and food is often stored for long periods while shipping is organised. *Less than a Container Load* offers a solution through a platform which can collect and aggregate information to help logistics companies share and reduce costs and increase efficiency and transparency.



It will disrupt the current agent intermediary model, and supplement the work of other grassroots organisations in encouraging agricultural production and exports. Growers will be able to book the transport of produce without undue storage time, allowing them to export more and retain the quality of their goods.

Stakeholders and partners have been consulted since the Dialogue, including the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce, landholders with storage facilities, Solomon Telekom and MPs. The project will run a pilot through 2020 for Guadalcanal Cacao farmers, and so the next three months will be spent on research and development and building contacts, as only 10% of the work lies in tailoring the app. The logistics of collection and delivery will take more work to organise, and warehouse owners and agents must be contacted again to sign memorandums of understanding and draw up budgets.

The app will be based on one used by Ethitrade with dragon fruit farmers in Vietnam. A final proposal will be put to the Solomon Islands government in October, and given to the Solomon Islands Port Authority to secure their support. A forum for the Chamber of Commerce and farmers could also be held in October or November, with the scheme due to start in January 2020.

The 12-month pilot should validate the model and quantify its social and economic impact. It could then be expanded into other crops, such as coconuts and coffee, and offer a scalable solution which could be used across the Pacific. In the long term, this transparent, user-friendly, multistakeholder approach should boost rural and regional economies in Pacific Island nations.

The 'shark tank' panel agreed that many small Pacific farmers face similar issues and the solution could be applied more broadly. They asked whether farmers would retain ownership of the crop throughout the process, rather than the middleman who currently bears the risk in the transaction.

The panel was told the prototype app was still under development, and that the farmers would retain as much control as possible. The current supply chain is riddled with personal interests and is ripe for disruption. The new approach would aim to share income and power more equitably. DFAT has mapped the value chain, and the app will help release bottlenecks within it. More shipping and logistics expertise is required to help develop it, but freight forwarders and shipping agents have not solved the problem before due to infighting between different logistics companies.

Digital Transformation in Education & Shipping

Pacific Connect Dialogue on Education • 22-23 November 2018 • Honiara, Solomon Islands
Pacific Connect Dialogue on Freight & Logistics • 25-26 June 2019 • Honiara, Solomon Islands

Since the 2018 Pacific Connect Round, ICDP has hosted two Dialogues in Honiara. The first was held on the topic of education and digital technology on 22-23 November 2018. The Dialogue was facilitated by Dr Ian West, A/C Chair of ICDP, Peter Fritz AM, Chairman of Global Access Partners, and the Hon. Peter Keesler Jnr who has since become a Member of Parliament for East New Britain Constituency in the National Parliament of Solomon Islands and is an ICDP Ambassador.

Pacific Connect returned to the Solomon Islands in June 2019 for the 'Digital Transformation Opportunities in Freight and Logistics' Dialogue. Potential projects, discussed by 11 emerging leaders included the automation of the business of ports, capability support services for local start-ups, and Less than Container Load (LCL) sharing to enable greater access to markets for small agricultural exporters.

<p>Project 1 'Every Building is a Classroom'</p> <p>Description Further development of the 2018 Pacific Connect Dialogue, Every Building is a Classroom is an Australian Aid Channel funded through the Cyber Connections Program and delivered by Common Code. It is a platform that maps underutilised facilities available for use as classrooms, enabling the delivery of education in those spaces. Using ICDP's Chat channel as a collaboration tool, the project team developed a proposal which was an award of the 2019 Australian Solomon Islands Technology for Development Challenge.</p> <p>Progress In June 2019, Common Code founder, Catherine Hall and the project team convened an information gathering workshop to coincide with the Pacific Connect Dialogue to provide the initiative to potential partners and stakeholders, along with enabling site visits. Prototypes are currently in development.</p> <p>Project 2 Less than Container Load Shipping</p> <p>Description The Freight & Logistics Dialogue in June considered a 'less than container load' freight service project. Currently, agricultural exporters from Solomon Islands struggle to export their products overseas, as these agribusinesses are small companies and fitting a full-sized export container (of cases and supply) is highly costly and inefficient.</p> <p>Progress To address the lack of facilities for co-loading and packing a container, the ICDP project team plans to hold a forum with key stakeholders to further investigate the opportunity and develop partnerships.</p>	<p>Project 3 On-ramp to the new digital economy</p> <p>Description Mobile app, developed by Australian agribusiness client, is an outdoor mobile hub that seeks to improve young people's skills in the commercial and government information. Originally developed for remote Australian communities, the project adapted for the Solomon Islands was announced as a winner of the Inaugural Technology for Development Challenge, run by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Cyber Cooperation Program.</p> <p>Progress Coming together with Earth Water People and further as the Pacific Connect Dialogue, the project is currently scoping potential sites and partners.</p> <p>Project 4 Blockchain Workshop</p> <p>Description ICDP, in collaboration with Solomon Islands Women in IT, convened a blockchain workshop after the Freight & Logistics Dialogue. Solomon Islands Women in IT requested a workshop focusing on emerging blockchain trends and technologies for its members. The workshop was delivered by Kenneth Katsibwa, Founder and Managing Director of Transable Solutions, and Ben Stasse, Chief Technology Officer of Agri Digital.</p> <p>Progress Thirty entrepreneurs and blockchain enthusiasts attended the three-hour workshop discussing potential use cases, including a national digital identity scheme and customary land registration.</p> <p>ICDP looks forward to hosting more workshops with Solomon Islands Women in IT in the future.</p>
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Lae SME Incubator Hub

Lae is the largest port and second largest city in PNG, and plays a pivotal role in connecting regional areas. Papua New Guinea has up to 10 million citizens, and many people come to Lae to look for employment. There are many well-educated young people who cannot find jobs, or want to work for themselves and be creative. However, they need help to found, register, plan and market their businesses and manage their finances.

The *Lae Incubator Hub* would offer advice and training to young entrepreneurs and ensure that new firms are properly registered, which would help the government collect its tax revenue and reduce fraud. It would also help attract angel funding for business, develop alumni who could offer mutual support, and offer export, ICT and market advice.

Several companies and foundations in PNG have expressed interest in supporting the scheme. Participants were offered financial estimates of its startup and running costs and were told it would help entrepreneurs and micro-SMEs produce a business plan, offer financial planning advice, hone their presentation skills, and encourage cultural and gender diversity. The project also seeks experienced local mentors to offer advice and contacts.

The 'shark tank' panel praised the research undertaken for the scheme and said the project could learn from the success of similar projects elsewhere, notably in Townsville in Northern Australia. The lack of innovation hubs in PNG offers a market opportunity, but also means there is a lack of people experienced enough to play an advisory role.

The panel noted that the proposed budget might be trimmed and in-kind support sought to launch the project. They were assured that office space had already been secured in Lae, while the Digicel PNG Foundation had expressed interest in providing free Wi-Fi.

Innovative & Disruptive Technology in PNG Agriculture

Pacific Connect Business Network Dialogue
1-3 April 2019 • Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea





ICDF hosted the second Pacific Connect Business Network Dialogue in Port Moresby this year. Twenty emerging leaders – six from Australia and 14 from PNG – came together to discuss the challenges and vast potential for digital connectivity in the country and wider region. Dialogue discussions and project outcomes focused on how improved digital services and disruptive technologies can generate new commercial and economic opportunities for the country's agricultural sector.

The Dialogue was facilitated by Andrew Carrilhes, Chair of the Pacific Connect Business Network Council, and John Peira, Chief Executive Officer of Nuginet PNG.

Project 1	Kumul Garden	Project 2	Lae SME Incubator Hub
Description	Kumul Garden is a small business based in Port Moresby that promotes healthy eating habits by supplying fresh produce directly to the customers' doorstep.	Description	The Lae SME Incubator Hub, a collaborative project that emerged from the 2019 Pacific Connect Business Network Dialogue, helps entrepreneurs augment their fundamental business abilities and supports micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in Lae and regional PNG.
Progress	Since the Pacific Connect Dialogue in April 2019, the project has undergone development. There have been discussions with the PNG Agriculture Commission and PNG Agriculture Commission members. Kumul Garden's founder, Sharon Werny, presented her business plan to the PNG Agriculture Commission members on 16-18 July in Port Moresby, coming to second place.	Progress	Since the Dialogue, the Incubator Hub concept has been scoped. The project will:
Current needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warehouse for fresh produce storage. The produce will be sorted, washed, weighed, packaged and stored in the warehouse ready for delivery. Cold storage facility and refrigerated van for deliveries. Associated equipment, including scales, environmentally friendly bags and boxes. 	Current needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach SMEs and micro-enterprises how to run a business. Select promising businesses and invite them into an 'Incubator', where they work with mentors, advisors and current leaders of the PNG business community to grow and scale their projects. Create an 'Angel Funding' arm where the most innovative projects will pitch their ideas to a panel of investors to receive support, funding, or ongoing mentoring to maximise project viability.

What's changed, partner's said it up

"The speed of communication is unbelievable, we just need to harness it. Digital disruption is here, it's the government's most powerful opportunity to address economic and social inclusion in the next decade of Papua New Guinea."

John Peira, Dialogue co-facilitator

What's changed, partner's said it up

"The Dialogue not only changed the way I view my business but also showed me to consider individuals willing to help and grow as a strong businessman. It opened doors of challenging opportunities for my business to scale, and the next part was that I wasn't alone on this journey."

Sharon Werny



PACIFICCONNECT
International Centre for Democratic Partnerships



Yumi Wan

The *Yumi Wan* project emerged from the Vanuatu Dialogue held in Port Vila in June 2019. It aims to help women empower other women in business. The name means ‘we are one’ and the project would create a woman’s advisory network to promote their interests among decision makers as well as provide mutual aid and support. It would differentiate itself from other organisations and councils by documenting the economic contribution which women make through handicraft production. Just one handicraft centre can generate AU\$55,000, but these contributions are not acknowledged in the national economic development plan.

Yumi Wan would connect and upskill women while celebrating their work and achievements. Pacific Island cultures can be suspicious of ‘tall poppies’, but the group would promote positive reinforcement and encourage the sharing of new ideas and give permission to stumble as well as succeed. The group would include urban women from the corporate world as well as rural artisan and micro-firms and run forums and events.

The project team has contacted *Women in Business Fiji* for advice and will seek ideas from women’s groups in PNG. Participants were encouraged to offer advice and support to the group to help working women in Vanuatu.

The first pilot event for 50 businesswomen and male supporters will be held on 24 October to gauge interest in the concept before more time and money is invested. It will offer food and music as well as teaching the art of the ‘elevator pitch’ and offering three inspiring speeches. Corporate sponsorship has already been arranged, and the next phase will see a larger conference in 2020 on business skills such as marketing, partnerships and goal setting. Phase Three will see the creation of a self-sustaining membership model, similar to the Fiji group, with tiered membership raising revenue to fund mentoring and workshops.

Support and help with connections to potential participants and sponsors in Vanuatu is sought, as well as suitable venues for events.

The ‘shark tank’ panel praised the targeted and pragmatic nature of the project and its willingness to partner with other organisations for advice. They underlined that people are central to the success of projects.

Kumul Garden

The final pitch featured *Kumul Garden*, a project Shalom Warrey initially created with her late sister. The new scheme builds on the grocery delivery service they built together. *Kumul Garden* removes the inconvenience of shopping at fresh produce markets in Port Moresby for busy workers with full-time jobs by offering the delivery of fresh fruits and vegetables to people’s homes or offices.

Facebook is commonly used in PNG, and 90% of people contacted on it showed interest in the idea, 50% placed an order and 30% paid in cash. Revenue comes from selling the fresh produce bought from local markets, with a fruit tray costing 30 kina and a mix of fish,

vegetables and fruit selling for 50 kina. The business was launched in 2017, but suffered in 2018 with the sister's ill health. It was revitalised in 2019 in memory of her and support is now sought for its expansion.

Participants with friends in PNG were asked to promote *Kumul Garden's* Facebook page through their personal networks. Mentorship would also be useful. The firm also seeks cold storage facilities in Port Moresby to allow the service to accept goods from the regions and distribute them to customers. PNG produces a lot of food, and better storage and distribution would help tackle food poverty.

The 'shark tank' panel said the success of the current business proved the idea was working well, and agreed that partnerships could help expand it.

The founder is interested in equity partners to finance a warehouse and cold storage areas to process food brought in from the provinces. However, she was warned that another home delivery service backed by an Israeli firm was shut down after pressure from local vendors, despite proving an initial success. It was noted that Woolworth recently announced an Amazon Prime-type service for grocery deliveries in Australia, and cities around the world are embracing the concept.

Participants hoped there was room for both delivery services and traditional retailers and were confident the *Kumul Garden* model could succeed, if the supply chain can be organised.





Support Session

Participants expressed their support for the projects, and several volunteered their help and expertise.

One member said his long years of business experience had taught him that finding customers, rather than advice or finance, was the only thing which mattered. He advised project teams to help each other, offer mutual support and find customers through their networks. Another participant said that lessons could be learned from similar projects and businesses elsewhere and reminded participants to be very clear about who their customers are and how the proposed service offers them value. The next speaker expressed interest in the *VR Samoa* project and offered to help create branding and social media content for it and other proposals as required. Another participant backed the *Mobile Me* project and was interested in increasing accessibility on the *Pacific Finds* website. It was suggested that Australian Oxfam shops may also like to partner with the project and sell authentic Pacific goods.

Participants were encouraged to contact projects through Slack and ICDP. ICDP will have some funds available in the future to help new projects but does not have large sums to back existing schemes. ICDP could provide a formal reference for projects seeking funding from other sources.

Michael Pilbrow asked participants to contact at least one project after the event and offer encouragement through social media.

Closing Remarks

Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu thanked all the participants and hoped everyone had learned from the day's exchange of ideas. She was sure they had been inspired, challenged, connected by the event and were committed to future success. She thanked the Hon. John Ajaka MLC for highlighting the political links between Australian and the Pacific, and Christopher Pyne's for his erudite and informed security review. She thanked the presenters of the project pitches and underlined that every meeting in *Pacific Connect* is an educational experience. She said the panel discussion for entrepreneurs had highlighted many of the issues new businesses face, and the project pitches had shared a common theme in the importance of relationships, rather than technology or money. She reiterated that projects must identify their target market, offer consumers value and build relationships in order to thrive. ICDP will offer the resources it has to help bring these ideas to fruition, and wishes them every success.

Michael Pilbrow thanked Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu for setting the positive and inclusive tone of the meeting, before bringing proceedings to a close.

Programme



ICDP and Global Access Partners present

PACIFICCONNECT IDEAS EXCHANGE

18-19 September 2019 • NSW Parliament House • 6 Macquarie Street • Sydney, Australia

Wednesday, 18 September 2019

PACIFIC CONNECT IDEAS EXCHANGE - WELCOME DINNER
New Ideas, New Connections

6:30PM	Networking Drinks	Strangers Function Room NSW Parliament House
7:00PM	Dinner served Welcome and Grace Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu , Special Advisor, International Centre for Democratic Partnerships (ICDP), Consultant, Strategic Development Group, Samoa Introduction and Acknowledgement of Country Dr Ian Watt AC , Chair, ICDP Keynote Address Ms Liesl Tesch AM, MP , Member of the NSW Legislative Assembly	
9:00PM	Close	

Thursday, 19 September 2019

PACIFIC CONNECT IDEAS EXCHANGE - PLENARY SESSION
New Ideas, New Connections

8:30AM	Registration	Preston Stanley Room NSW Parliament House
9:00AM	Pacific Welcome and Prayer Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu , Special Advisor, ICDP Michael Pilbrow , Founder and Partner, Strategic Development Group	
9:10AM	Welcome Address from the Hosting Member The Honourable John Ajaka MLC , President, NSW Legislative Council	
9:20AM	ICDP Welcome: <i>Pacific Connect</i> Year in Review Dr Ian Watt AC , Chair, ICDP	



ICDP and Global Access Partners present

PACIFICCONNECT IDEAS EXCHANGE

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9:45AM	Keynote Address <i>Pacific Island nations and the changing geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific</i> The Honourable Christopher Pyne ICDP Ambassador
10:15AM	<i>Morning tea</i>
10:45AM	PACIFIC CONNECT PROJECT PRESENTATIONS <i>Every Building is a Classroom</i> Presenters – Cameron Neil, Co-Founder and Director, Red Hat Impact Robertson Szetu, Marketing Manager, Solomon Telekom <i>WEF Global Shapers Community Hubs for Pacific Youth Empowerment</i> Presenter – James Fraser, Lawyer, Minter Ellison, ICDP Ambassador
11:30AM	ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERS: PANEL DISCUSSION Panellists – Zha Agabe-Granfar, Executive Director, VERGE Molly Benjamin, Founder, Ladies Finance Club James Kana, Managing Director, Ueniusu'unu Agribusiness Group Georgina Naigulevu, Senior Manager, Applications, Project and Innovations, HFC Bank
12:30PM	<i>Lunch served</i>
1:30PM	IDEAS EXCHANGE Practice pitches Q&A session - Crowd-fund support
3:00PM	Closing Remarks Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu and Michael Pilbrow
3:30PM	<i>Afternoon Tea</i>
4:00PM	Close

Speakers and Facilitators

Zga Agabe-Granfar

**Founder and Executive Director
VERGE PNG**

Proudly born and raised in Papua New Guinea, grateful to be educated in and a citizen of Australia and humbled by her ethnic heritage from the rural regions of the Philippines, Zha takes her global identity to heart. Zha founded VERGE, a boutique agency in 2016 based in Port Moresby specialising in digital marketing, brand innovation and communications. Through the experiences of building VERGE so far, it has become evident to Zha how impactful and powerful digital technology, skills and trends are for Papua New Guinea and the wider Pacific region. She has more than 16 years' experience working across the multinational, SME and not-for-profit sectors. Zha was a co-facilitator of the *Pacific Women Entrepreneurs – Technology Influencers* Dialogue held in Brisbane in June 2019.

Hon. John Ajaka MLC

**President
NSW Legislative Council**

John George Ajaka is an Australian politician, born in Bulli, NSW. He is the President of the New South Wales Legislative Council. Ajaka has been a member of the NSW Legislative Council since 2007, representing the Liberal Party, and he is the first Liberal Party Lebanese Australian member of an Australian parliament. He was schooled at St Joseph's Primary School and Marist College Kogarah, where he served in the Army Cadets, graduating as the second highest-ranking officer in his group, and served briefly in the Australian Army Reserve. He subsequently studied law and opened his own practice in Rockdale. He was later elected as a City of Rockdale councillor, serving in that role until his election to parliament. In 2011, John became Minister for Multiculturalism, Disabilities and Ageing, with responsibility for Youth until 2017, when he was elected as President of the Legislative Council, and re-elected as President in May 2019.

Molly Benjamin

**Founder
Ladies Finance Club**

Molly is an entrepreneur, innovator, marketing and event specialist who is passionate about educating and empowering women to take control of their financial futures. She has over 10 years' experience working with national and international organisations and charities in various marketing and event positions in Australia and the UK. When women are empowered with money, they become difference makers. Molly started her first company, *She's on the Money* (UK), in 2018, after being frustrated with how geared the financial world was to men and not women. She now runs engaging and social events, corporate workshops and online webinars and courses for women in the UK and Australia on a range of different financial topics.



James Fraser

**Funds Associate, MinterEllison
ICDP Ambassador**

James Fraser is a restructuring and insolvency litigation lawyer. He has many strong relationships managing startups, an incubator, a theatre company and Chinese clients. James is Director of Partnerships at Australia-China Young Professionals Initiative (ACYPI), and Careers, Australia-China Youth Association (ACYA). In November 2018, James attended the APEC *Voices of the Future* Forum during the APEC Summit in Papua New Guinea. He has been integral in establishing the First World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Shapers Hub. In August 2019, James became an Ambassador of ICDP.

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.

James Kana

**Managing Director
Ueniusu'unu Agribusiness Group**

James is Managing Director of Ueniusu'unu Agribusiness Group. The business operates commercial agribusiness and value-adding initiatives, primarily through trading premium quality dried cocoa beans and other agri-products to overseas and local markets. The aim is to be the commercial hub connecting local and global markets to Small Malaita and where sustainable and environmentally friendly use of resources generate income, which in turn create quality standards of living and prosperity for rural farmers, their families and their communities. James has held many previous roles such as Program Officer, Australian Volunteers International; FX Dealer, ANZ Bank; and Senior Finance Officer, Ministry of Finance and Treasury, Solomon Islands.

Georgina Naigulevu

Senior Manager

Applications Project and Innovations

HFC Bank

Georgina has over 10 years of software development experience in the ICT field across multiple industries, including the Government of Fiji, media, software and mostly recent the banking Industry. She is currently the Senior Manager Applications, Projects and Innovations at the only local bank in Fiji, HFC Bank. Prior to joining HFC Bank, Georgina worked for ANZ Bank where she held a regional role of the Manager MIS and Business Performance that looked after 12 Pacific Island countries. Georgina has created eCommerce sites and developed Intranet Portals to help with organisation process improvements. Georgina has Bachelor of Science in Computing Science & Information. She is a mentor at the Faculty of Science & Technology, University of the South Pacific.

Cameron Neil

Co-Founder & Director

Red Hat Impact

Cameron is an entrepreneur, investor, advisor, project manager and consultant. He has significant experience in sustainable and ethical supply chains, food and fashion industries, international development, social enterprise, organisational development, stakeholder engagement, impact investment and business strategy. Utilising his wealth of experience, Cameron facilitates capital investments and provides business advice to small and medium sized Australian businesses to help them grow revenues, business capability and achieve more positive social and environmental impact.

Michael Pilbrow

Founder and Partner

Strategic Development Group

Michael is the Founder of Strategic Development Group Pty Ltd, which is an implementation partner of ICDP. Michael has over 20 years' experience in strategic planning, community engagement and relationship building with government, business and communities in Australia and overseas. Michael has a depth of experience managing relationships with and on behalf of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), as well as experience in finding new and innovative solutions to difficult challenges. He has led major strategic reviews in the Pacific for DFAT, the Australian Federal Police (AFP), the World Bank and designed the DFAT-funded Australia Africa Partnerships Facility (AAPF).



Hon. Christopher Pyne
ICDP Ambassador

Christopher Pyne was elected to the House of Representatives for the seat of Sturt in 1993. He retired from the Parliament in 2019. He was the Australian Minister for Defence responsible for delivering the \$200 billion build-up of Australia's military capability, the largest in Australia's peacetime history. Christopher has also been a Minister in the Howard, Abbott, Turnbull and Morrison Governments serving as Minister for Ageing, Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Industry Innovation and Science, and Minister for Defence Industry. In his time as a Minister, he has delivered the National Innovation and Science Agenda, 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 2006, he founded 'headspace', Australia's national youth mental health initiative. Christopher is the author of *"A Letter to my Children"*, published in 2015. Before entering Parliament, Christopher practised as a solicitor. Christopher is married to Carolyn and is the father of Eleanor, Barnaby, Felix and Aurelia.

Robertson Szetu
Marketing Manager
Solomon Telekom

Robertson has worked for Solomon Telekom Company Ltd since 1996. He has firsthand experience in the introduction of commercial internet services for consumers and businesses in the Solomons – from the early 56kbit/s dial-up access to current unlimited broadband services. Robertson has a Management Information Systems – Business Administration degree from the University of Hawaii, USA. He is a recipient of the USA funded East-West Center Pacific Islander Development Program scholarship in 2000 and also an Alumnus of the Commonwealth Study Conference dialogue, now called the Emerging Pacific Leaders Dialogue. Robertson currently works in Honiara as the Marketing Manager for Our Telekom.

Liesl Tesch AM, MP
Member for Gosford
NSW Legislative Assembly

Liesl Tesch AM, MP lives in Woy Woy, and for the last 20 years has taught students at local public schools including Brisbane Water Secondary College until she was elected to the Parliament of New South Wales in April 2017. Liesl has represented Australia proudly at seven Paralympic Games, bringing home two Gold medals in sailing. Between teaching and the Paralympics, Liesl established the not-for-profit *Sport Matters* to bring targeted development assistance to people with disability in Australia, the Pacific, Asia and Africa.

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, he 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 the International Centre for Democratic Partnerships, Chair of the ADC Advisory Council, and Chair of the Australian Governance and Ethical Index Fund. He is also the recently retired Chair of BAE Systems Australia. He serves on the Boards of Citibank Pty Ltd, Smartgroup Corporation, the Grattan Institute (University of Melbourne), O'Connell Street Associates Pty Ltd and the Committee for Economic Development of Australia, and is a Member of the Australian National Maritime Museum Council. Dr Watt is also a Member of the Male Champions of Change, 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. He also has an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of Technology, Sydney.



Participants

Ms Zha Agabe-Granfar

Executive Director, VERGE

Togialelei Dr Safua Akeli Amaama

Associate Professor
Director, Centre for Samoan Studies
National University of Samoa

Ms Molly Benjamin

Founder, Ladies Finance Club

Ms Pauline Benson

Founding Director, Island Finds

Ms Cath Cooksley-Little

Communications and Marketing Manager
Pacific Trade Invest

Mr Harold Dimpel

Founder, mHITS Ltd

Ms Kylie Ellwood

Director, Trainer, Consultant
The Insight Collective

Ms Ruha Fifita

Co-Founder, ON THE SPOT Inc.

Ms Mele Filiai

Computer Programmer
Ministry of Finance
Tongan Government

Mr James Fraser

Lawyer, Minter Ellison
ICDP Ambassador

Mr Javed Hanif

Executive Officer
Faculty of Arts, Law and Education
University of the South Pacific

Ms Taylor Hawkins

Business Advisor, Strategic Consultant
Founder, Linq Advisory

Mr Arul Joshy

Inventory Team, DB Schenker

Mr James Kana

Managing Director
Ueniusuunu Agribusiness Group

Ms Mollina Kapal

Principal Projects Engineer, ICT Applications
National Information and Communications
Technology Authority (NICTA)

Mr George Karliychuk

Lead Educational Technologist
Office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Digital Futures),
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Ms Lucy Kasimwane

Founder and Managing Director
LUKASCO Group

Ms Shauna Katafono

Co-Founder and Operations Manager
Traseable Solutions

Ms Selu Kouvaka

Senior Systems Engineer, MEIDECC
Government of Tonga

Ms Samantha Kies-Ryan

Director, Communication, Community
Engagement and Social Impact
Earth water people

Ms Julia King

Consultant, Business Coach
Kings Consultancy

Ms Lena Korugl

Senior Project Manager
Kina Bank

Ms Sarah Mak

Managing Director
The Storyboxes

Mr Brian Mangi

Network Administrator
Solomon Islands National University

Ms Letitia Masaea

Data Quality Officer
Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency

Mr Chad Morris

General Manager
Investment and Tourism
Pacific Trade Invest Australia

Ms Joanne Murphy

Owner and Manager
Clothes Peg Station

Ms Georgina Naigulevu

Senior Manager
Applications, Projects and Innovations
HFC Bank

Mr Andrew Naigulevu

Systems Analyst
Ministry of Employment, Productivity
and Industrial Relations, Fiji

Mr Cameron Neil

Co-Founder and Director
Red Hat Impact

Mr Brown Onahikeni

Business Advisor
Adam Smith International
Strongim Bisnis Program

Mr Sam Parker

Manager, Learning Technologies
Division of Learning and Teaching
Charles Sturt University

Mr Elvin Prasad

Regional ICT Coordinator
Council of Regional Organisations
of the Pacific

Ms Alexia Rae Costello

Foreign Investor
Sole Trader

Prof Roberta Ryan

Director, Institute for Public Policy
and Governance
University of Technology, Sydney

Ms Karolina Salanoa

Director, Pasifika Australia

Ms Fenella Sam

Entrepreneur, Advocate and
Social Entrepreneur
Hope Community Services

Mr Prashanth (PJ) Shanmugan

Serendipity Ventures

Ms Paula Simoes Dos Santos

Senior Consultant
Institute for Public Policy and Governance
University of Technology, Sydney

Mr Tom Smethurst

Visiting Services Officer
Department of Parliament Services

Ms Vasiti Soko

Company Owner
Vspatial GIS Consultancy Co.

**Mr Matt Steine**

Head of Digital City Strategy
Townsville City Council

Mr Daniel Stricker

Musician
Augmented Reality Adventurer
Siberia Records

Mr Robertson Szetu

Marketing Manager
Solomon Telekom

Ms Maryann Talia Pau

Master Weaver, Land and Art

Ms Serah Tari

Business Coach, Consultant

Ms Julliane Terry

Owner and Manger
Tok Stret Consulting

Mr Nafitalai Uluinikorotabu

ICT Officer
Fiji Disable Peoples Federation

Ms Wilma Vocor

General Manager HR
Air Vanuatu

Ms Salote Waqairatu

Landscaping Solutions, Fiji

Ms Shalom Warrey

Entrepreneur
Founder, Kumul Garden

Ms Renata Zanetti

Consultant, Intopia Digital

Ideas Exchange Conveners & Sponsors**Mr Benjamin Blackshaw**

Communications Coordinator and Project Support
ICDP

Ms Olga Bodrova

COO and Director of Research, GAP

Ms Tina Briggs

Program Manager, ICDP

Mr Andrew Carriline

ICDP Ambassador
Non-Executive Director, Kina Securities

Mr Michael Collins

Partner, Strategic Development Group

Mr Peter Fritz AM

Strategic Advisor, ICDP
Chairman, GAP; Group Managing Director, TCG

Ms Catherine Fritz-Kalish

Director, ICDP
Co-Founder and Managing Director, GAP

Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu

Special Advisor, ICDP
Consultant, Strategic Development Group

Mr Robin McKenzie OAM

Pacific Division, DFAT

Ms Simone Pensko

Chief Executive Officer, ICDP

Mr Michael Pilbrow

Partner, Strategic Development Group

Dr Ian Watt AC

Chair, ICDP

Prof Ian Young AO

Director, ICDP
Kernot Professor of Engineering
University of Melbourne

Extracurricular Activities

Complementing the *Pacific Connect Ideas Exchange*, ICDP organised a short study tour for 38 Pacific and Australian participants. On Tuesday, 17 September, participants visited the **Sydney Startup Hub** run by the NSW government. They then toured **Fishburners** which inspires and grows Australian tech startups. The founder of **The Studio** – an incubator hub supporting startups and scale-ups to engage with new technologies to create global businesses in the media, entertainment, communications, sound/music, games and creative industries – spoke about her personal journey in establishing the hub and led a tour of the facilities. Delegates then toured the University of Sydney's **Incubate** hub, before reconvening for the *Pacific Connect* Community networking drinks that evening, where they met up with the Sydney-based alumni and the ICDP Board and staff.

On Wednesday, 18 September, the focus moved to personal development and project team activities. The day commenced with project team meetings and small group sessions, followed by one-on-one mentoring sessions with existing Australian leaders from the *Pacific Connect* Network (15 mentoring sessions were conducted). A number of delegates also visited the **Blue Chilli She Starts** program where they heard from a number of female entrepreneurs who recently founded startups. In the afternoon, project teams attended a 'Pitch Development' workshop facilitated by Cameron Neil. The purpose of the two-hour workshop was to take people through the process to move from early-stage ideas to identifying what needs to be done to initiate a project, identify early deliverables, including who benefits, and determine funding phases. Teams were invited to deliver their pitches at the *Ideas Exchange* the following day.

A group of Pacific guests also attended *A Vision for Australia: GAP 10th Annual Economic Summit 'Beyond Education: Lifelong Learning for Australia's Future'*, held in the NSW Legislative Assembly Chamber on 20 September.





Testimonials

"As an emerging entrepreneur, I felt like it was the best professional development I have done! I learnt so much from the sessions and especially from the other entrepreneurs in the room. There is already movement happening for collaborations in the Solomons, Samoa and PNG for myself and my company! As someone who often works alone and in small teams, I really found being amongst other positive people who are dreaming big dreams and making them happen totally re-energising. Our Solomons LCD team are particularly engaged and inspired by the event. A team member called me yesterday morning to get things moving and the team met that afternoon (this is Solomons light speed!!) You will be hearing from us shortly as we move things forward." – **Pacific participant via email**

"Thanks for inviting me. It is an amazing network to be part of, and after this dialogue, now see the broader picture of the Pacific Connect project, and realise the calibre and significance of your work." – **Australian participant via email**

"I appreciate all your hard work to get me and others to the Pacific Connect Ideas Exchange. I have learned the importance of teamwork and allowing people with different strength to work together. I'm now back at work and I have shared with my colleagues everything I have learned." – **Pacific participant via email**






"It was another incredible and inspiring experience; being part of something like that has had a huge impact of me. Furthermore, I am so excited about the progress of our project which would not have been possible without the Pacific Connect dialogues and connections. I now have an amazing team who are equally excited about this project and I hope to build on more of the Australian contacts over the next couple of weeks as a couple have already expressed their interest in working with us and have reached out via email and LinkedIn." – **Pacific participant via email**


"Thank you and your team for inviting me to attend the Sydney Pacific Connect Ideas Exchange. It was a great opportunity for me and a fantastic week of collaboration and networking with the Pacific Connect family. I have noticed a vibrant and enthusiastic team with greater energy than expected. I learned a lot of new things from every single events organised. I believe Pacific Connect has a great potential to create and drive change in the Pacific going forward with its unique way and style of work." – **Pacific participant via email**


"Thanks so much for all the informative sessions and avenues provided for us to be able to meet and share with other people across the Pacific. It encourages and motivates me to keep doing what I am passionate about." – **Pacific participant via email**


"It was a such a pleasure meeting you again and networking with so many great participants at the Forum. I believe the relationship which has been established with these participants will go a long way." – **Pacific participant via email**


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 **James Kana** Incredible few days in Sydney. Thank you very much ICDP, GAP, and NSW Parliament for hosting and uniting the Pacific family in a time of heightening geopolitics and global challenges. So much energy and enthusiasm from all participants tackling issues that affect us all, challenged existing modalities, and finding innovative solutions. Kudos to the hard working team behind the scene to make 2019 Pacific Connect Ideas Exchange a success. Look forward to more engagement in the coming months.


[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [Message](#) · 6d  1

 **Samantha Kies-Ryan** Thank you for hosting and engaging us so thoughtfully. I was so honoured to be chosen as an emerging leader in the Pacific and I definitely got a lot out of it!

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [Message](#) · 6d  2

 **Serah Linore Tari** Thank you so much ICDP for the wonderful 3 days of great learning. The institutions we visited, the pitching training we participated in and the actual pitching. Great experience and networking.

 **SheStarts**
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We love inspiring [#womenentrepreneurs](#) striving to make change in the world!

Today, it was so valuable for our [#founders](#) to meet the Pacific Connect founders who have come to [#Sydney](#) for the [International Centre for Democratic Partnerships](#) - ICDP Annual Forum.

Their team have brought together a network of current and emerging leaders from [#Australia](#) and the [#Pacific](#) to focus on 'digital connectivity as an enabler of opportunity' in the region.

It was so fantastic to see the alignment between our third cohort of [#femalefounders](#) and these founders from around [#Fiji](#), [#Vanuatu](#), [#PapuaNewGinuea](#), [#Samoa](#) and the [#SolomonIslands](#) who also want to solve some of societies created challenges.

We appreciate having another amazing opportunity to share stories with other inspiring [#entrepreneurs](#).

